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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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QUOTE of THE DAY

70...This is the number of times the PM's 'good friend' and the recipient of his many forced hugs has declared that he was responsible for the sudden halt of Operation Sindoor

—CONGRESS

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Guv locks horns with govt over Assembly speech

The session starting today is convened to discuss G RAM G

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

In yet another Governor vs government face-off in a non-BJP ruled state, Thaawarchand Gehlot has objected to delivering the Governor's address to the Karnataka legislature scheduled on Thursday, leading to a stalemate over the fate of the customary speech that outlines the government's policies.

A total of 11 paragraphs in the government prepared speech touching upon the "repeal" of MGNREGA and issues including devolution of funds seem to have irked the Governor, who wants them to be deleted. State minister HK Patil met Gehlot on Wednesday amid the impasse but there seemed to be no forward movement.

Thaawarchand Gehlot and Siddaramaiah **PHOTO: ANI/PTI**

According to Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Patil who led a delegation to Lok Bhavan, the Governor has reservations about some 11 paragraphs, including those against the MGNREGA repeal. He wants them to be removed entirely, which is not acceptable to the government.

This will be informed to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and the decision that the government ultimately takes, will be communicated to the Lok Bhavan.

Patil, accompanied by Advocate General K Shashi Kiran Shetty and Legal Advisor to CM AS Ponnanna, also said that the Governor has still not communicated to the government that he will not come to the joint session.

Sources said the government agreed to remove only a couple of sentences critical of the VB-G RAM G Act.

Also, AG Shetty has reportedly left for New Delhi, fueling speculations about a potential legal battle if the Governor does not turn up.

"He is to address the joint session of the Assembly and the Council tomorrow at 11 am. The Constitution under Article 176(1) specifically mandates the speech." Patil said.

Other things in the address include the alleged injustice to the State in devolution of funds, GST related issues, delay in drought relief, and injustice in 15th finance commission, Patil said. "Should we keep quiet?" *—PTI*

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US will not use force to take Greenland: Trump at WEF

DAVOS, 21 JAN

President Donald Trump said the US will not use force to take Greenland, stressing that only Washington can protect the mineral-rich island.

"I have tremendous respect for people of Greenland and Denmark, but only the US can secure Greenland," Trump said in his 70-minute-long speech at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum on Wednesday. He also launched a blistering attack on NATO allies on a range of issues, including tariffs, environment and immigration.

"We fought for beautiful Denmark (in World War II), which is not a land, but a big piece of ice, cold and poorly located. It is a very small ask compared to what we have given them for many, many decades. We were stupid to give it back (to Denmark)," Trump said. "People thought I would use force. I don't have to use force. I don't want to use force. I won't use force."

PHOTO: PTI

Trump said that Greenland, which is a Danish territory, has a strategic location between the US, Russia, and China. "The US needs it for strategic reasons, not for rare earth minerals."

Trump also called for immediate negotiations for the US to acquire Greenland from Denmark, describing the country as ungrateful. *—PTI*

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PHOTO: FREEPIK

Listing houses for Census to begin in J&K from 1 June

JAMMU, 21 JAN

House Listing Operations (HLO) will be conducted across Jammu and Kashmir from 1 to 30 June as part of Census 2027, officials said on Wednesday. Self-enumeration will begin 15 days prior to the field exercise. The schedule was finalised by the UT Level Census Coordination Committee chaired by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, with a formal notification to be issued by 31 January. Director Census Operations Amit Sharma outlined the framework of Census 2027, India's first fully digital census, featuring the Census Management and Monitoring System, self-enumeration and caste enumeration. The meeting approved expedited hiring of manpower and directed deputy commissioners to set up district census cells and ensure coordination, training and supervision for smooth implementation. *—PTI*

Lokayukta raids on Zameer's aide unearth Rs 14.38 crore assets

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

The Karnataka Lokayukta on Wednesday said cooperative societies director Sardar Sarfaraz Khan was found to be possessing assets to the tune of Rs 14.38 crore.

Sardar is also Secretary to the government in the Housing and Minority Welfare Departmen and Housing Minister Zameer Khan's aide.

The Lokayukta sleuths had raided at 13 locations linked to Khan including "his residences, offices and the residences of his relatives," on 24 December, 2025, in a Disproportionate Assets (DA) case, according to a release. During the searches, the Lokayukta team found him owning four houses, 37 acres of agricultural land, which is estimated to be worth Rs 8.44 crore. The team found ornaments worth Rs 3 crore, Rs 1.64 crore worth vehicles, fixed deposits and other investments worth Rs 5.94 crore, the release added. *—PTI*

Sarfaraz Khan **PHOTO: X**

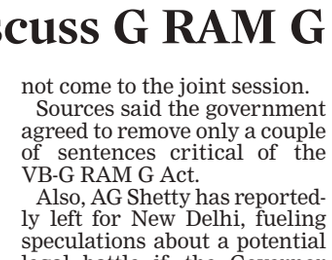
DMK attacks Sanatan: Madras HC quashes FIR against Malviya

MADURAI, 21 JAN

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court quashed an FIR registered against BJP leader Amit Malviya for allegedly distorting the comments made by Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on 'Sanatan Dharma'. The court called it an attack on Hinduism by Dravida Kazhagam and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).

Justice S Srimathy said Udhayanidhi's comments were tantamount to hate speech and questioning it was a reaction. She said, "The speech is totally against 80 per cent Hindus."

In 2023, Udhayanidhi compared Sanatan Dharma to dengue, malaria and coronavirus and called for its eradication at one 'Sanatan Abolition Conference' organised TN Progressive Writers-Aritists Association. Malviya posted a video of the speech, saying it was like calling for a "genocide" of 80 per cent of sanatanis.



A case filed by DMK's KAV Thinakaran said the BJP IT Cell Chief distorted the speech and spread fake news in Hindi to create discord.

The plaint added that Malviya's post was followed by a seer, Paramhans Acharya of Ayodhya, announcing a Rs 10 crore award to behead Udhayanidhi. As a result, Malviya's post would also come under hate speech.

The court, however, said Malviya's remarks didn't "distort" anything.

The court, referring to the respondent stating that Mahatma Gandhi had opined against Sanatan Dharma, said they only wanted unwanted practices gone. Except Periyar, no leader had spoken against Sanatan Dharma. *—PTI*

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UMESH REPLACES SUSPENDED DGP RAMACHANDRA

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

The Karnataka government on Wednesday posted Umesh Kumar in concurrent charge of DGP Civil Rights Enforcement.

His appointment came after the suspension of DGP CRE K Ramachandra Rao after his purported obscene video went viral in social media.

In the suspension order on Monday, the State government said Rao has "acted in an obscene manner, which is unbecoming of a government servant and also causing embarrassment to the government."

Rao is the step-father of Kannada actress and gold smuggling accused Harshavardhini Ranya, who is in the Bengaluru Central Jail. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Dhinakaran-led AMMK returns to NDA fold

CHENNAI, 21 JAN

The TTV Dhinakaran-led Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) on Wednesday rejoined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), months after walking out of the AIADMK-led bloc alleging "betrayal". This is just ahead of the keenly anticipated Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. Dhinakaran had quit the NDA in September 2025. He and his aunt VK Sasikala were expelled from the AIADMK in 2017, following which he floated the AMMK and later aligned with the NDA during the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. *—PTI*

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India, Pak exchange fire at LoC days after drones spotted

SRINAGAR, 21 JAN:

Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged fire along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday night.

According to reports, the firing took place when Pakistani troops fired two rounds while the Indian Army personnel were installing surveillance cameras along the LoC in the Keran Sector. This drew a single retaliatory shot from the Indian side. There were no reports of casualties on either side, officials said, adding that the situation was calm and under control.

The Indian Army has stepped up surveillance along the LoC and the International Border following reports of heightened terror-related activity from across the border.

This comes days Pakistani drones were spotted along sensitive areas of the Line of Control in Poonch district and the Indo-Pak International Border in Samba district. .

Following the "Operation Sindoor" conflict in May 2025, these incursions have intensified, particularly ahead of Republic Day. *—Salar News*

Security personnel during a search and cordon operation amid heightened security in Srinagar on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

AFTER HE WAS DENIED MONEY

Doctor murders couple by giving anaesthesia in Shivamogga

SHIVAMOGGA, 21 JAN

Shivamogga police on Wednesday arrested an Ayurvedic doctor for murdering an elderly couple by injecting a high dose of anaesthetic at their residence in the Bhootanagudi area of the city.

The victims, Chandrappa, 80, a retired employee of the Visvesvaraya Iron and Steel Plant, and his wife Jayamma, 70, were found dead under mysterious circumstances with no visible injury marks. None of their three children were living with them.

The crime came to light on Tuesday when the couple failed to come out for their routine walk. After repeated phone calls went unanswered, neighbours entered the house and found Chandrappa dead in the bedroom and Jayamma's body in the hall.

Initially believed to be natural deaths, suspicions were raised after the couple's son lodged a complaint. Police investigations revealed that the accused, Dr Mallesh, Chandrappa's nephew, had visited the house on Monday. Mallesh, who worked at a hospital in Shivamogga and was recently dismissed for misconduct, was reportedly inspired by a similar crime committed earlier by a doctor at Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru.

PHOTO: AI

Police said Mallesh was heavily in debt and had sought a loan of Rs 15 lakh from Chandrappa, which was refused. Angered, he planned the murders to rob the couple.

Under the pretext of treating their knee pain, Mallesh administered 50mg of propofol, causing an instant drop in blood pressure leading to death.

He then fled after stealing around 80g of gold ornaments and cash *—Salar News*

Leopard kills pilgrim at MM Hills

MYSURU, 21 JAN

In yet another incident of leopard attack, a man was killed at MM Hills in Hanur taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Tuesday night. According to the police, the deceased is Praveen Kumar, 37, of Cheeranahalli of Mandya district.

Praveen Kumar, along with several villagers, had gone on a pilgrimage from his village to Malemahadeshwara temple of MM Hills. The company was camped at Talebetetta on Tuesday night and had planned to continue the journey the next morning. It is said that a leopard had attacked Praveen at night and dragged his body to the woods.

The body was spotted few meters from the road in the jungles of MM Hills, this morning.

The devotees and pilgrims vented their ire on forest department officials for arriving late at the sport and also requested the officials to capture the man-eating leopard. *—Salar News*

Deepinder Goyal steps down as Eternal's CEO

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Eternal, the parent company of Zomato and Blinkit, on Wednesday announced that co-founder Deepinder Goyal will step down as Group CEO with effect from February 1. Goyal will transition to the role of Vice Chairman, subject to shareholders' approval for a five-year term.

In a letter to shareholders, Goyal said he was resigning to pursue new ideas involving "significantly higher-risk exploration and experimentation", which he felt were better pursued outside a publicly listed company. "If these ideas belonged inside Eternal's strategic scope, I would have pursued them within the company. They do not," he said.

Goyal has recently invested in ventures unrelated to Eternal's core business, including a USD 25 million commitment to Continue Research, focused on health and longevity, and USD 20 million in LAT Aerospace, co-founded by former Zomato COO Surobhi Das.

Emphasising the need for focus and discipline at Eternal, Goyal said the expectations and legal responsibilities of a public company CEO in India require singular attention.

As part of the transition, all of Goyal's unvested ESOPs will revert to the company's ESOP pool to support leadership retention without shareholder dilution.

The parent entity of Zomato and Blinkit, among other businesses, was re-branded as Eternal last year. It was co-founded by Goyal in 2008, initially as a restaurant discovery platform called Foodiebay in Delhi, providing menus and reviews, before rebranding to Zomato in 2010.

Zomato listed on the stock exchanges in 2021, re-branded to Eternal last year to reflect its expansion beyond the food delivery business to quick commerce (Blinkit); Hyperpure (B2B supplies); District (ticketing, dining out, etc.). *—PTI*

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e-KYC error cuts off aid to 24L Ladki Bahin beneficiaries

MUMBAI, 21 JAN

A flawed question in the e-KYC process for the Ladki Bahin scheme has resulted in more than 24 lakh women beneficiaries in Maharashtra being wrongly classified as government employees, leading to the abrupt stoppage of their monthly financial assistance. The error, acknowledged by the Women and Child Welfare Department has now forced the government to deploy 1 lakh anganwadis to verify the affected beneficiaries. *—PTI*

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MLA NA Haris, Minister MB Patil, DyCM DK Shivakumar with Bharti Group executives at Davos, on Wednesday **PHOTO: X @MBPATIL**

WEF: CFI, Bharti keen on data centres in K'taka

DAVOS, 21 JAN

Global digital infrastructure firms CFI Technologies and Bharti Enterprises have expressed interest in setting up data centres in Karnataka, including in second-tier cities, while Carlsberg Group has reiterated its commitment to establish a Rs 350 crore bottling unit in the state.

This comes as Karnataka government officials held a series of investment-focused meetings with global companies and institutions at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, discussing opportunities across technology, energy, manufacturing, infrastructure, education and consumer sectors, while assuring policy stability and facilitation.

Bharti Enterprises, had previously invested around Rs 13,000 crore in the State. Bharat Forge explored manufacturing and precision engineering opportunities aligned with Karnataka's industrial ecosystem.

Digital payments major PayPal highlighted its interest in AI-led innovation, talent development and startup funding, while Imperial College London discussed expanding its R&D and academic presence, including a possible footprint in KWIN City. Carlsberg Group reviewed progress on its Rs 350 crore bottling expansion and signalled interest in further capacity addition.

French AI firm Mistral AI discussed setting up a global capability or R&D centre in Bengaluru, citing Karnataka's strong AI talent base. Renewable energy firm ReNew Power reviewed investments across solar, wind, storage and hybrid projects, while water technology company Xylem proposed studies for advanced wastewater treatment solutions.

Philip Morris International discussed future investments and regulatory engagement, while Belrise Industries reviewed progress on its upcoming project. Energy firm Octopus Energy presented proposals on vehicle-to-grid technology and net-zero housing models.

Imperial College London discussed the possibility of setting up a research and development centre in KWIN City, coming up between Dabasapete and Doddaballapur.

Separately, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar invited global investors to Bengaluru, highlighting infrastructure growth, talent availability and investor-friendly governance. *—PTI*

Cong, Oppn prepare for stormy Legislature Session

Cong to focus on MGNREGA, BJP will rake up law & order

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

The joint session of the legislature that will begin on Thursday is expected to see a showdown between the Congress and the Opposition BJP-JD(S) combine.

Confrontation is expected between the treasury and Opposition benches as the ruling Congress is planning to pass a resolution against the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre for repealing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), and demand for its restoration by scrapping the new Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act.

The State Cabinet had decided not to accept the VB-G RAM G Act and to take up a legal battle against it. Ministers have said that the State government would have to pay Rs 20,000 crore above the normal cost under the new scheme.

The State government's move coincides with the Congress' nationwide campaign "Save MGNREGA". However, the BJP is preparing to counter the ruling Congress' "misinformation campaign", by highlighting that VB-G RAM G Act aims at strengthening rural employment and livelihood.

Both parties are set to trade accusations about scams in various departments.

The assembly hall at Vidhana Soudha on the eve of the joint Assembly Session, in Bengaluru on Wednesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

However, the session is challenging for the Congress government due to the ongoing power tussle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar. DK Suresh recently indicated that it was far from over, and the Opposition has repeatedly said that fight for the top post has caused law and order failures.

Key among those is the Ballari clash between supporters of Ballari City Congress MLA Nara Bharath Reddy and Gangavati BJP legislator G Janardhan Reddy, where a Congress worker died of bullet injuries. The BJP has demanded a CBI probe, which Siddaramaiah said they have no "moral right to do".

Similarly, the BJP may bring up the Sidlaghatta row, where Congress leader Rajeev Gowda allegedly threatened and the city's municipal corporator over the instillation of banners.

The BJP has called Home Minister G Parameshwara incompetent, while JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy has also called him a "rubber stamp" Minister. They also allege an increase in cyber and drug related crimes. The BJP attacked the Congress after Maharashtra police made several drug-related arrests in Karnataka.

The BJP also claims that crimes against women are on the rise.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka has also been frequently demanding that Excise Minister RB Timmapur be sacked, pointing to an alleged multi-crore bribery scam after Lokayukta police caught three excise officials "red-handed".

The BJP may also raise the recent Kogilu eviction row and the government's decision to rehabilitate those whose houses were demolished by authorities for alleged illegal construction. The BJP has claimed that Congress is being subservient to Kerala.

The BJP has frequently claimed there are many illegal Bangladeshi nationals in the State.

The Congress will hit back, alleging a delay in Central government clearances for several key development and irrigation projects. The ruling party has also flagged cuts in the State's share of funds from the Centre.

Siddaramaiah on Tuesday had said that he will start budget preparations after the joint session. The 2026-27 Budget is likely to be presented in March, according to official sources.

This would be Siddaramaiah's record 17th budget. *—PTI*

Gov Thawarchand Gehlot, VP CP Radhakrishnan **PTI**

Nobody should dictate terms to Bharat: VP

TUMAKURU, 21 JAN

The Vice President CP Radhakrishnan on Wednesday said India seeks to be among the world's most powerful nations so that "nobody dares to dictate terms to Bharat".

Addressing the silver jubilee of CMR Institute of Technology, he said the country has moved beyond being a technology adopter and is emerging as a technology creator through initiatives such as Digital India, Startup India and Make in India.

"Bharat will be marching towards the Viksit Bharat goal by 2047… We want to be the most powerful, not to dominate other countries, but nobody should dare to dictate terms to mother Bharat," he said.

Earlier, he visited Siddaganga Mutt in Tumakuru, a prominent Lingayat institution. He hailed the ideals of Shivakumara Mahaswami, the late pontiff. *—PTI*

RTO officer gives fake fitness certificate to Guj vehicles

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

A senior motor vehicle inspector posted at the Regional Transport Office (RTO), Bengaluru (Central), has been placed under suspension for renewing the fitness certificates of 41 vehicles from Gujarat without physical verification.

Nisar Ahmed, was suspended "on grounds of dereliction of duty for irregularly issuing Fitness Certificates to vehicles from Gujarat," a KSRTC (Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation) press note stated here on Wednesday. The matter came to light after the e-Detection team of the Gujarat State Transport Office examined the data available on the Vehicle e-Detection Portal and verified 41 vehicles at Karnataka RTO offices, after which Fitness Certificate was issued.

On the same day, these vehicles passed through toll plazas in Gujarat.

Deputy Director, Office of the Transport Commissioner, Gandhinagar, Gujarat then alerted his counterpart in Bengaluru.

Minister of Transport and Excise Ramalinga Reddy directed the Transport Department Commissioner to act. The Transport Commissioner instructed the Bengaluru City Division, to submit a report in this regard. *—Salar News*

DOUBLE DECKER IS BACK

After 29 years, double-decker buses returned to Bengaluru on Wednesday. Each bus seats 40 passengers, with tickets priced at Rs 180. Visitors enjoy a ride near Vidhana Soudha. The bus will ply from Ravindra Kalakshetra to Lalbagh **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Raichur JD(S) MLA alleges death threats from sand mafia

RAICHUR, 21 JAN

Raichur's Devadurga MLA Karemma G Nayak alleged that she and her party workers are facing death threats from the sand mafia. The JD(S) member filed a complaint on Monday at the Devadurga Police Station, and 60 people were booked on Tuesday.

She said that at around 8 am on Sunday, that hundreds of sand mafia members suddenly arrived at her residence and threatened to "finish her off". She directly accused the police of colluding with the sand mafia and engaging in illegal activities.

"The intelligence department personnel have become inactive. The police are protecting those involved in illegal sand transportation, matka gambling, liquor sales, and ganja trafficking. In the taluk, 7–8 police personnel are collecting money from mafia elements," she alleged.

"I will submit complaints to the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, and Home Minister and seek protection. A team led by Srinivas Nayak, brother of Congress defeated candidate Sridevi Nayak, visited my house and issued death threats," Karemma alleged.

Legislative Council member TA Sharavan has demanded that the sand mafia be immediately arrested and strict legal action be taken. Sharavan alleged a "goonda raj" in the State and said the Congress had lost control of its officials.

He stated that the sand mafia is operating along the banks of the Krishna River.

He said that Karemma had raised her voice against matka gambling, illegal betting, and sand mafia activities in her constituency.

"If this is the fate of an MLA who tried to prevent the drying up of the Krishna riverbed, one can imagine the plight of ordinary citizens," he said. *—Salar News*

MLAs to flag Krishna river woes with Fadnavis

BELAGAVI, 21 JAN

Alleging that nearly 3 thousand million cubic (TMC) of water of the Krishna river has been wasted following the collapse of Gate No 22 of the Hippargi barrage, MLAs have said that they will meet the Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and raise concerns that the riverbed may dry up in February.

"The situation could lead to an acute crisis of drinking water," said Kagwad MLA Raju Kage, adding that that the issue would be raised during the Legislative Assembly session. "A delegation comprising MLAs from Belagavi and Bagalkot districts will meet the Maharashtra Chief Minister to submit a proposal seeking the release of 2 TMC water from the Koyna reservoir into the Krishna River."

Every year, during the summer the Krishna river in North Karnataka dries up, following which water is released in phases from the Koyna reservoir in Maharashtra. This helps mitigate water shortages in Belagavi, Koppal and Raichur districts.

Kage expressed apprehension that the large-scale outflow of water from the Hippargi barrage could result in crop losses worth lakhs of rupees. He said efforts would be made to purchase water from neighbouring Maharashtra. The MLAs would also mount pressure on CM Siddaramaiah to take up the matter with Maharashtra.

Meanwhile, engineers have assured the public that restorative work is underway to repair the damaged bridges. *—Salar News*

Cong fumes after Udupi DC waves saffron flag

Udupi District Commissioner TK Swaroopa was seen waving a saffron flag during a procession on 18 January **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

UDUPI, 21 JAN

The State Congress has objected to District Commissioner TK Swaroopa over holding a saffron flag during a religious procession here.

The party has demanded action against her, while the officer insisted her participation was official, not political.

The District Congress Committee's Legal and Human Rights Cell wrote to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah seeking action after Swaroopa allegedly waved the flag on 18 January, handed to her by Udupi BJP MLA Yashpal Suvarna, during the Paryaya Procession from Jodu Katte to Krishna Math.

Harish Shetty, Cell president, said such conduct violated service rules and secular principles, calling for inquiry.

Swaroopa responded that she flagged off the Puraprevesh programme at 3am as part of her duties as Udupi City Council administrator and had participated in civic honour events for the new Swamiji, emphasising there was no political intent.

The procession marked the Paryayotsava, transferring ritual and administrative control of Udupi Sri Krishna Temple to Shiroor Matha. Under the centuries-old Paryaya system, the Ashta Mathas rotate temple management every two years, following the tradition instituted by 13th-century Dvaita philosopher Sri Madhwacharya. *—PTI*

Sudha flags AI scams using her voice

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Rajya Sabha member, author, and philanthropist Sudha Murty has cautioned the public against fake videos circulating online that falsely use her image and voice to promote financial schemes. She described the content as "deep fakes" created without her knowledge or consent.

Speaking in a video on X, Murty urged people not to make financial decisions based on such fraudulent material and to verify any information through official channels. She highlighted that these videos falsely claim she is promoting investments, offering returns many times over, and expressed concern for individuals who have already lost money after trusting them.

"I want to alert everyone that there are videos of mine circulating on social media claiming that investing a certain sum will yield huge returns. This is entirely false," Murty said.

With a warning to remain vigilant, Murty advised people to consult banks or the police before acting on such messages. "Save your money, invest wisely, and do not fall for these scams," she said. *—PTI*

'BLACK' KPS MAGNET SCHEME

Students slam govt for merging govt schools

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Left-wing student organisations in Karnataka on Wednesday accused the state government of pushing ahead with a plan to shut down thousands of rural government schools under the "KPS Magnet" scheme, calling it an assault on public education and poor children's access to schools.

The KPS Magnet scheme seeks to consolidate neighbourhood schools into larger and centrally located Karnataka Public Schools.

At the Press Club of Bangalore, representatives of AISF, SFI, AIDSO, AISA and KVS released a copy of a government order which, they said, envisages the closure of over 40,000 government schools and their merger into about 6,000 KPS Magnet schools, with 900 such schools planned in the first phase.

Representatives of student groups AISF, SFI, AIDSO, AISA and KVS at the Press Club of Bangalore, Wednesday **PHOTO: INSTA/AIDSO KARNATAKA**

They alleged that existing village schools with adequate enrolment were being merged and that parents would be forced to bear the burden of transportation.

The organisations raised the slogan, "Abandon the KPS Magnet project that robs poor children of education! Save public education, save our village government schools!"

The groups alleged that the circular shifts responsibility for transport to School Development and Monitoring Committees and opens the door to outsourcing and corporate funding, which they claimed was a move towards privatisation.

They also condemned compulsory vocational training from Class six under the KPS scheme. They also pointed to existing shortages, noting that there are 59,000 vacant teacher posts, thousands of schools lacking basic repairs and many functioning with a single teacher.

"The government is moving towards an anti-civilisation act of creating human machines who lack basic subject knowledge and critical thinking," they said, urging an withdrawal of the "Black KPS Magnet". *—PTI*

'K-RIDE being developed as people-centric'

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

K-RIDE Managing Director Lakshman Singh on Wednesday said that the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP) is being developed as a people-centric mobility solution. He was speaking during a Citizens' Stakeholders Outreach Programme.

Singh told the gathering that the Rail Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) Limited's (K-RIDE) mandate is not limited to building rail infrastructure alone.

"Our responsibility is to build public trust through transparency, accountability, and continuous engagement with citizens," the K-RIDE MD said in a statement. Citizens' groups, residents' welfare associations, and NGOs, were briefed on the progress of the projects, it added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Mozambican rights activist wins Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

NEW DELHI, JAN 21

The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2025 has been awarded to Mozambican human rights activist Graça Machel. Chosen by an international jury chaired by former National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon, she was recognised for her pioneering work in education, health, nutrition, economic empowerment and humanitarian efforts under difficult circumstances. The award carries a prize of Rs 1 crore, a trophy and a citation. A key figure in Mozambique's liberation struggle, Machel became the country's first Minister of Education after independence, sharply expanding school enrolment. She later led a landmark UN study on children affected by armed conflict and continues to work globally for social justice. *—PTI*

Manipur BJP MLA booked over school demolition

IMPHAL, 21 JAN

An FIR has been registered against a BJP MLA in Manipur over the alleged demolition of an under-construction school in Imphal East district, police said on Wednesday. The case was lodged on a complaint by site supervisor Konsam Santosh Meitei against legislator L Susindro Meitei. Police said the FIR includes charges of criminal trespass, house trespass and causing damage to public property under the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984. The complaint alleges that the Khurai Heikrumakhong Junior High School building was demolished with an excavator on 18 January, on the MLA's instructions. The FIR notes that the MLA publicly claimed he ordered the demolition. *—PTI*

New BJP Chief reviews poll prep in 5 states

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

BJP's new National President Nitin Nabin on Wednesday held his first strategy meeting with office bearers and reviewed preparations for the upcoming assembly elections in five states, including West Bengal. Nabin also asked the party functionaries to strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level and counter the Congress "negative campaign" against the VB-G Ram G Bill by sensitising the people about the benefits. The party is already running a campaign across the country to counter the Congress' claims on the UPA-initiated MGNREGA. Nabin discussed with party functionaries how the campaign was being conducted across the country and made necessary suggestions to strengthen further it. *—PTI*

Punjab police bust Pak-linked arms smuggling ring

CHANDIGARH, 21 JAN

Punjab Police on Wednesday uncovered a cross-border illegal arms module linked to Pakistan-based smugglers, arresting two men in Tarn Taran. The Amritsar Commissionerate recovered six pistols and two cartridges. The accused were identified as Gurpreet Singh alias Gopi, 22 of Rattoke and Surjit Singh, 35 of Chela Colony, the latter having a criminal record. Police said they were supplying weapons to gangsters under direction from foreign handlers. Gopi was caught with four pistols and two live cartridges and revealed via interrogation that he coordinated with Pakistan-based smugglers through social media, receiving arms via drones. Surjit Singh, involved in transporting weapons, was also arrested. An FIR under the Arms Act has been registered, and investigations continue. *—PTI*

Dhinakaran-led AMMK returns to NDA fold

EPS welcomes Dhinakaran months after he quit NDA

CHENNAI, 21 JAN

The TTV Dhinakaran-led Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) on Wednesday rejoined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), months after walking out of the AIADMK-led bloc alleging "betrayal". This is just ahead of the keenly anticipated Tamil Nadu Assembly elections

Signalling a thaw after years of acrimony rooted in the AIADMK's internal feud, AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami welcomed Dhinakaran back into the NDA. The AMMK founder reciprocated with "heartfelt thanks", while conceding that his differences with the AIADMK amounted to a "sibling rivalry".

Dhinakaran met senior BJP leader and Union Minister Piyush Goyal and was formally re-inducted into the NDA. Welcoming the move, Goyal, the BJP's in-charge for the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, said the NDA would work unitedly to defeat the DMK alliance in the state.

"With my elder brother and leader Edappadi K Palaniswami, my brother and good friend Anbumani Ramadoss (PMK), G K Vasan (Tamil Maanila Congress) and other NDA colleagues, we are committed to removing this corrupt DMK government," Goyal said. The Anbumani Ramadoss-led faction of the PMK had joined the NDA on 7 January.

Though Palaniswami was not present during AMMK's formal return, he later said Dhinakaran had joined the NDA to "uproot the evil force of the DMK's tyrannical rule, end dynastic politics and restore the golden rule of Amma (J Jayalalithaa)".

Addressing reporters, Dhinakaran brushed aside questions on leadership, pointing out that Palaniswami had already been declared the NDA's chief ministerial candidate.

Dhinakaran quit NDA in September 2025. He and his aunt VK Sasikala were expelled from AIADMK in 2017, following which he floated AMMK and later aligned with the NDA during the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. *—PTI*

Union Minister Piyush Goyal with AMMK President TTV Dhinakaran as he joins the NDA alliance in Chennai on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

BJP seeks Udhayanidhi's sacking as DyCM

CHENNAI, 21 JAN

BJP on Wednesday criticised the DMK after the Madras High Court quashed an FIR against party leader Amit Malviya, who was accused of "distorting" Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin's remarks on Sanatana Dharma. BJP leaders demanded Stalin's removal and legal action against him.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal called the order a "strong rebuke" to the "narrow and anti-Hindu mindset" of the DMK in Tamil Nadu and a "setback" to the opposition INDIA bloc's "anti-Hindu ideology". "Truth cannot be put on trial, nor can political vendetta destroy a civilisational faith," he said.

BJP National Spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla alleged the FIR against Malviya, the party's IT chief, was a deliberate attempt to penalise him for speaking out after the controversial comments. *—PTI*

PHYSICAL VERIFICATION NEXT

e-KYC error cuts off aid to 24L Ladki Bahin beneficiaries

MUMBAI, 21 JAN

A flawed question in the e-KYC process for the Ladki Bahin scheme has resulted in more than 24 lakh women beneficiaries in Maharashtra being wrongly classified as government employees, leading to the abrupt stoppage of their monthly financial assistance.

The error, acknowledged by the Women and Child Welfare Department (WCD), has now forced the government to deploy nearly one lakh anganwadi workers across the state to physically verify the affected beneficiaries.

A senior official from the department on Wednesday said one of the questions in the e-KYC form was wrongly framed, using two negative words instead of a simple query. The question in Marathi read "Tumchya gharatle koni sarkari nokrit nahi na?" (Nobody in your family works for the government, right?). The question confused the respondents and around 24 lakh replied in the affirmative. This was automatically taken to mean that at least one family member was a government employee, and the system stopped the monthly payment, the WCD official said.

The scale of the error became clear during data review, as Maharashtra has 8 to 9 lakh government employees, including those in semi-government bodies and corporations. "We also started receiving complaints from different parts of the state regarding non-payment of the monthly instalment (Rs 1,500 given under the scheme)," he said. *—PTI*

- The error has now forced the government to deploy nearly one lakh anganwadi workers across the state to physically verify the affected beneficiaries

Setback for Uddhav as MNS & Sena tie up

THANE, 21 JAN

Amid the race for mayoral posts across civic bodies in Maharashtra, a new political equation has emerged in the Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation on Wednesday with five corporators belonging to the Raj Thackeray-led MNS offering support to Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena, which is in alliance with the BJP.

This decision by the MNS corporators could be viewed as a setback to Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) as the two parties fought the keenly-watched 15 January elections to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) together.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut claimed that Raj Thackeray was "distraught" over the development in Kalyan Dombivli as it was not the official decision of his party, while MNS leader Bala Nandgaonkar said the new equation appears to be part of an understanding at the local level.

In the 122-member Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC), the Shiv Sena has emerged as the single largest party by winning 53 seats, while ally BJP stands second with 50 seats. With the support of five MNS corporators, there are now 108 members in the alliance.

Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and NCP (SP) have won eleven, two and one seats respectively.

The lottery for the mayoral posts in Mumbai and 28 other civic bodies are scheduled to be held on 22 January. *—PTI*

Join NDA for funds: Athawale to Vijayan

KANNUR, 21 JAN

Union Minister of State Ramdas Athawale on Wednesday suggested that Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan join the BJP-led NDA, claiming it would be a "revolutionary" step that would ensure more Central funds and a "big package" for the State.

Athawale said Vijayan could return as chief minister if the Left joined the NDA, adding that CPI(M) and CPI should follow suit.

The remarks came amid a sharp Centre–state confrontation over finances. Vijayan has accused the Union government of squeezing Kerala by withholding Rs 5,900 crore in the last three months of the current financial year, calling it a 'battle for survival'.

He alleged selective fund releases, cuts in borrowing limits and attempts to undermine welfare schemes, particularly in health and education.

At a mass LDF-led satyagraha in Thiruvananthapuram, Vijayan said Kerala was seeking not charity but its constitutional right, and vowed resistance to what he termed an economic blockade. He also criticised the Congress-led UDF for refusing joint protests.

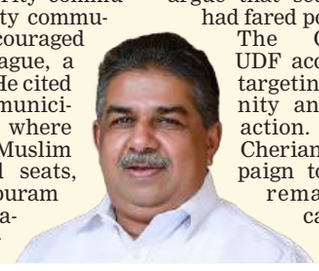
The funding row includes Samagra Shiksha arrears of Rs 1,160.52 crore. CPM MP John Brittas said funds were being linked to signing PM-SHRI. *— Agencies*

KERALA MINISTER SAJI APOLOGISES FOR MALAPPURAM REMARKS

T'PURAM, 21 JAN

Kerala Culture Minister Saji Cherian on Wednesday withdrew his controversial remarks on recent local body election results and expressed regret, saying his words were "twisted and falsely portrayed" as being against a particular community.

The controversy erupted after Cherian said on Sunday that while the RSS promoted majority communalism, minority communalism was encouraged by Muslim League, a Congress ally. He cited the Kasaragod municipality results, where the BJP and Muslim League gained seats, and the Malappuram district panchayat polls, dominated by the League, to argue that secular parties had fared poorly.



The Congress-led UDF accused him of targeting a community and demanded action. Responding, Cherian said a campaign to distort his remarks had caused him "great pain" and hurt the secular position he had upheld throughout his public life.

Acknowledging the hurt caused, Cherian expressed "genuine regret" and withdrew the statement. The Congress dismissed the apology as inadequate, with Sunny Joseph demanding CPI(M) and government action, saying the issue would be raised widely. *— PTI*

Minister Majumdar accuses TMC of misleading people on SIR

KOLKATA, 21 JAN

Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar on Wednesday accused TMC of misleading people over the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, as he led a rally in north Bengal ahead of Assembly polls.

Majumdar led the 'Paribartan Sankalpa Yatra' from Siliguri crossing to Raiganj railway station in Uttar Dinajpur district, protesting alleged corruption, crimes against women and poor law and order. He told the gathering that SIR was being conducted in several states, but the TMC was fearful in Bengal.

"About 58 lakh names have been struck off in the draft rolls in West Bengal, while two crore names were deleted in Uttar Pradesh," he said, claiming the BJP government in UP was unconcerned, unlike TMC.

Majumdar said no unrest had been reported elsewhere due to SIR and asserted that no Hindu refugee need fear citizenship issues. *—PTI*

India, Pak were headed for nuclear war: Trump

WASHINGTON, 21 JAN

US President Donald Trump touted ending the conflict between India and Pakistan as among the accomplishments of the first year of his second term in the White House, saying the two countries "were going to go nuclear" in his opinion, and that he saved millions of lives by stopping the war.

Trump said he ended "eight unendable wars in 10 months" which included those between Cambodia and Thailand, Kosovo and Serbia, the Congo and Rwanda. "Pakistan and India, they were really going at it. Eight planes shot down. They were going to go nuclear in my opinion," Trump claimed yet again on Tuesday on the one-year anniversary of his second term in office.

Addressing a packed White House press briefing room, Trump said Pakistan prime minister said: "Trump saved 10 million people, and maybe much more than that'. They're both nuclear countries." *—PTI*

Lone seconds BJP demand for Jammu state

SRINAGAR, 21 JAN

Peoples Conference president Sajad Lone on Wednesday seconded the BJP's demand for a separate Jammu state and said that he prayed for it.

In a statement, the MLA from Handwara in the Valley, said, "I pray to God that separation becomes possible. It would be true liberation. But beware, the big crocodiles will invent new stories tomorrow. Still, despite everything, we hope this comes to pass."

Lone was commenting on the demand from some BJP leaders, including former minister Sham Lal Sharma, for declaration of the Jammu region as a separate state. "This is a rare and golden moment for Kashmiris. Do not be misled by hollow slogans," Lone said.

Challenging National Conference president Farooq Abdullah's insistence on continued unity of Jammu and Kashmir, Lone asked who would shoulder the burden of this "so-called unity". While Kashmiri leaders routinely claim the moral high ground of secularism, Kashmiri students continue to get beaten, humiliated and targeted across the country, the Peoples Conference leader said, adding that people of the Valley have not consented to bear this "disproportionate burden". *PTI*

SC asks if EC's SIR is beyond judicial review

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked if the Election Commission's power to hold ongoing SIR (Special Intensive Revision) is untrammelled and beyond judicial review.

It said the revision of electoral rolls can have grave civil ramifications for people whose names do not figure in the voters' list.

The observations came from a bench of the Apex court comprising Chief Justice and Justice Joymalya Bagchi during the final hearing on petitions challenging the EC's decision to undertake the SIR in states.

"If something affects the civil rights of people, why should not the process followed be in accordance with sub-section (2)?" the CJI asked, referring to Section 21 of the 1950 Act, which governs the preparation and revision of electoral rolls.

Justice Bagchi echoed the same concerns, questioning whether the EC could exercise an "untrammelled" power beyond judicial review.

The bench heard extensive submissions from senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, representing the EC, while examining the possibility of deviating from the RPA, 1950 and related rules for conducting the SIR.

In Kolkata, a commission official said the EC was likely to defer publication of the final voters' list beyond the 14 February date.

FIR filed against EC

This comes, even as a FIR was filed against the EC in Purulia after an 82-year-old man committed suicide due to "anxiety over the ongoing SIR", an officer said. *—PTI*

JAILED YET UNBROKEN

Wangchuk wants thermometer for experiments to improve jails

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk has sought permission to obtain a thermometer inside Jodhpur jail to conduct simple experiments on eco-responsive architecture aimed at improving prison barracks, his wife Gitanjali J Angmo said on Wednesday.

In a post on X, Angmo said she met Wangchuk on Tuesday and handed over books he had requested, including one on ants and another on climate change.

"I met Sonam Wangchuk yesterday and finally gave him the book on ants, a gift from his eldest brother, along with books on climate change and its solution," she said.

Wangchuk, a Ramon Magsaysay Award-winning activist and educator, was detained under the National Security Act on 26 September, two days after protests in Ladakh demanding statehood and Sixth Schedule status turned violent, leaving four people dead and 90 injured. He has spent over 110 days in jail and remains in solitary confinement.

Angmo said Wangchuk asked her to check with the jail administration and the Supreme Court if he could be allowed instruments such as a thermometer. "He wants to conduct simple experiments on eco-responsive architecture to make the jail barracks better," she said.

She reiterated her demand for his release, saying, "Release Sonam Wangchuk now so that he can continue his nation-building work in education and environment." Angmo has filed a habeas corpus petition challenging his detention.

The next hearing is scheduled for 29 January. *—PTI*

Sonam Wangchuk *PHOTO: PTI*

- Gitanjali J Angmo said she met Wangchuk on Tuesday and handed over books he had requested, including one on ants and another on climate change

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

2 Andhra techies die due to choking after drinking

BANDAVADDIPALLI, 21 JAN

Two software engineers from Annamayya district of Andhra Pradesh died after allegedly choking on food following heavy alcohol consumption, police said on Wednesday. The deceased, Mani Kumar, 35 and Pushparaj, 27, were drinking beer with four friends from their village on 17 January. The group consumed 19 cans of beer over several hours. Kumar, who was reportedly already intoxicated, collapsed while returning home and complained of breathing difficulty. He died in hospital, while Pushparaj died later the same night. Police said preliminary findings indicate overconsumption of alcohol and food becoming lodged in the throat, causing respiratory distress. A case has been filed, post-mortems conducted, and lab analysis is on. *—PTI*

TN student, who ingested borax for weight-loss, dies

MADURAI, 21 JAN

A first-year college student died after consuming 'venkaaram' (borax) after allegedly following advice from a social media video, police said. Kalaiyarasi, 19, a student at a private women's college in Narimedu, bought the substance from a local native medicine shop after watching a YouTube video promoting it for weight loss. She consumed it on 17 January and soon developed vomiting and diarrhoea. Though treated initially at a private hospital and sent home, her condition worsened, with severe abdominal pain and blood in her stools. She was rushed late at night to Government Rajaji Hospital, where doctors declared her dead on arrival. Police are investigating matter. *—PTI*

Vehicular pollution blamed as Delhi air remains 'very poor'

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Delhi's air quality stayed in the 'very poor' category on Wednesday despite a marginal improvement in pollution levels, with the city recording a 24-hour average AQI of 330. Jahangirpuri recorded the worst reading at 390. Minimum temperatures ranged from 7.2°C at Safdarjung to 9°C at Ridge. Of the monitoring stations, 30 reported 'very poor' air and eight 'poor'. Informing the Supreme Court, the Commission for Air Quality Management said vehicular emissions are the main contributor to Delhi-NCR pollution. It proposed several measures, including phasing out polluting vehicles and stronger PUC checks. A bench ordered action plans.*—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

HC raps student over PIL to bar B'desh from T20

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday reprimanded a law student for filing a PIL seeking to bar Bangladesh from the men's T20 World Cup over alleged atrocities against Hindus. The petition also urged the ICC to allow Bangladesh to compete only if human rights compliance was confirmed. Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia questioned the PIL's rationale, calling it a waste of judicial time. The court noted it could not direct the ICC, Bangladesh Cricket Board, Sri Lanka Cricket Board, or foreign entities, saying foreign policy falls under the executive. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta appeared for BCCI. The court allowed the petitioner to withdraw the petition. *—PTI*

SC ends 65-day marriage after gruelling 40 cases

Warns against courts becoming battlegrounds for couples

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

PHOTO: AI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday dissolved a marriage that lasted just 65 days, granting divorce to a couple who have lived apart for over 13 years and pursued more than 40 cases against each other, holding that the relationship had irretrievably broken down and the parties "may not have been made for each other".

Invoking its extraordinary powers under Article 142, a bench of Justices Rajesh Bindal and Manmohan said the bitterness between the parties had reached a stage where reconciliation was impossible. "We find this to be a clear case of irretrievable breakdown of marriage," the bench observed.

The court noted that the couple married on 28 January, 2012, but the wife left the matrimonial home within 65 days, alleging cruelty by the husband and his family. The spouses have since lived separately, litigating across courts in Delhi, Allahabad, Ghaziabad and Lucknow.

The wife sought dissolution under Article 142 without claiming alimony and requested quashing of multiple civil and criminal proceedings. The court verified the status of the cases from the concerned courts before passing orders.

- Bench of Justices said the bitterness between the parties had reached a stage where reconciliation was impossible

The husband, appearing in person, opposed the divorce, alleging misrepresentation and claiming the wife had "spoiled his life". He said he did not consent and had filed perjury applications.

Rejecting the objections, the bench said consent was irrelevant where the marriage had collapsed. *—Agencies*

'More trial courts key to robust system'

Observing that additional trial courts would strengthen the justice delivery system, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said accused need not approach the apex court for bail or speedy hearings if more courts function effectively. It sought an update by 10 February on setting up a special trial court in Delhi. - PTI

SC extends relief in AP liquor scam

The Supreme Court on Wednesday extended interim protection to three accused in the alleged Rs 3,500 crore Andhra Pradesh liquor scam, but declined to interfere with the high court's cancellation of their default bail. A Bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant asked them to seek bail before the trial court. - PTI

SC bats for expert committee on Aravallis

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Flagging the risk of irreversible environmental damage resulting from the illegal mining, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said it would set up an expert committee to comprehensively examine mining and related issues in the Aravalli range.

A Bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant asked Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati and amicus curiae K Parameshwar to suggest, within four weeks, names of environmentalists and scientists with mining expertise.

The committee will function under the court's supervision.

The court briefly extended its earlier order keeping in abeyance its directions on a uniform Aravalli definition.

It also recorded an assurance from ASG KM Nataraj, for Rajasthan, that no unauthorised mining would take place there immediately. *—PTI*

NO RELIEF TO TDB OFFICIALS

Sabarimala gold row: Prime accused Potti granted bail

KOLLAM/KOCHI, 21 JAN

- The court, however, dismissed the bail pleas of former TDB president A Padmakumar and former TDB officer B Murari Babu and Roddam Pandurangaiah Naga Govardhan

A Kerala vigilance court on Wednesday granted bail to Bengaluru-based businessman Unnikrishnan Potti, the prime accused in the case relating to the loss of gold from the Sreekovil (sanctum sanctorum) door frames of the Lord Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala.

He will, however, remain in custody as he is also arrested in a separate case concerning the loss of gold from the Dwarapalaka (guardian deity) idols.

Potti was granted bail after the Special Investigation Team (SIT) failed to file a chargesheet within the mandatory 90-day period. The detailed order, including conditions, is awaited.

On the same day, the Kerala High Court dismissed the bail pleas of former Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) president A Padmakumar, former TDB administrative officer B Murari Babu and Ballari-based jeweller Roddam Pandurangaiah Naga Govardhan.

Justice A Badharudeen declined to grant relief to the accused, with detailed reasons yet to be issued. Babu had earlier been denied bail in December and moved the High Court again in January seeking relief.

The SIT is probing both cases involving the alleged loss of gold from the Sreekovil door frames and the Dwarapalaka idols at the hill shrine. So far, 12 people, including Potti and two former TDB presidents, have been arrested as part of the investigation. Officials said further arrests remain possible as financial trails and administrative lapses are examined by the SIT. *— PTI*

Army deployed in Assam's violence-hit Kokrajhar

GUWAHATI, 21 JAN

The Army has been deployed in sensitive areas of the Kokrajhar district of Assam after mob violence allegedly between Bodos and Adivasis left two people dead and triggered arson and clashes, officials said on Wednesday.

Army personnel conducted joint patrols with the district administration in Karigaon and nearby areas on Tuesday night, a defence spokesperson said, adding that a flag march would be held as a confidence-building measure. Four Army columns are currently stationed there.

Officials said the situation was under control, with tight security in Kokrajhar and neighbouring Chirang. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said arrangements were in place to deploy the Army, while the Rapid Action Force was already on the ground.

Police deployed during a protests on highway in Kokrajhar *PHOTO:PTI*

The violence followed a road accident on Monday night when a vehicle carrying three Bodos hit two Adivasi persons near the Karigaon outpost. The occupants were allegedly assaulted, the vehicle torched, and one person died. Another succumbed to injuries on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, both communities blocked a highway, and attacked a police outpost. Police baton-charged protesters and fired tear gas. Prohibitory orders were imposed across districts. The home department has also suspended internet. *—PTI*

'Bandh' hits district in Arunachal over mosque construction

ITAGANAGAR, 21 JAN

A 24-hour bandh over alleged illegal construction of mosques disrupted normal life in Lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh on Wednesday, though police said it remained peaceful.

Called by the Ziro unit of the ST Bachao Andolan Committee, the shutdown saw shops closed, offices sparsely attended and traffic off roads.

Protesters are demanding demolition of two under-construction mosques at Old Ziro and Hapoli. Police claimed that there were no proper documents for the constructions and that the works were being carried out through deeds of agreement.

Authorities imposed prohibitory orders under BNSS and termed the bandh illegal; police said highways remained open for commuters. *—PTI*

Family members mourn the death of Hemant Gaikwad (inset), who succumbed to severe diarrhoea and vomiting allegedly linked to contaminated, in Bhagirathpura, Indore *PHOTO: PTI*

Indore water crisis kills family's sole earner

INDORE, 21 JAN

A 50-year-old e-rickshaw driver, Hemant Gaikwad, died of diarrhoea allegedly caused by contaminated drinking water in Bhagirathpura area here, his family said.

Residents claim at least 25 deaths since late December, while a Madhya Pradesh government report submitted to the High Court on 15 January cited seven fatalities. A 'death audit' by GM Medical College indicated that 15 deaths may be linked to the outbreak.

Tests found E. coli contamination in 51 tube wells, attributed to sewage mixing with the municipal water supply. Gaikwad's financially weak family sought government compensation and action against those responsible.

The Madhya Pradesh High Court ordered authorities to preserve original records, including key records, amid PILs. It directed medical care, water supply, testing and disinfection, and sought suggestions for a committee. *—PTI*

PILOTS SAFE

An Indian Air Force aircraft with its parachute deployed is seen after it crashed into a pond during a training session, in Prayagraj *PHOTO: PTI*

IAF aircraft crashes into pond in Prayagraj

NEW DELHI/PRAYAGRAJ, 21 JAN

- The IAF confirmed via a post on X that the aircraft encountered an engine snag and was force-landed away from populated areas, preventing damage to life

A two-seater microlite aircraft of the Indian Air Force crashed into a water body in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, on Wednesday after experiencing a technical malfunction, officials said. Both pilots onboard emerged uninjured.

The IAF confirmed the incident via a post on X, stating the aircraft, on a routine sortie from AF Station Bamrauli at 12.15hrs, encountered an engine snag and was force-landed away from populated areas, preventing damage to life or property. A Court of Inquiry has been ordered to determine the cause.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (City) Manish Shandilya said the aircraft was flying towards Phaphamau and the Sangam area when the snag occurred. The pilots executed a controlled landing in a pond near KP College, George Town police area.

With assistance from police, fire brigade personnel, local residents, and divers, the pilots were rescued unharmed. Authorities have cordoned off the site, and investigation into the incident is ongoing.

Microlite aircraft are generally used for training, bird reconnaissance, and survey purposes. *—PTI*

Nearly 100 stray dogs allegedly poisoned near Hyd

HYDERABAD, 21 JAN

Nearly 100 stray dogs were allegedly poisoned to death in Yacharam village near Hyderabad, prompting police to register a case against the local sarpanch, secretary, and ward member, officials said on Wednesday.

The incident follows the killing of nearly 500 stray dogs across Telangana since 6 January. An animal welfare activist from the Stray Animal Foundation of India alleged in a complaint that the dogs were injected with poisonous substances on 19 January.

Preliminary investigation suggests around 50 dogs were killed, though authorities are continuing to verify the number and locate carcasses.

Earlier, Hanamkonda police booked nine people, including two women sarpanches, for allegedly killing around 300 stray dogs in Shayampet and Arepally villages. Another 200 dogs were reportedly killed in Kamareddy district, leading to cases against six persons, including five sarpanches.

Officials suspect that some elected representatives carried out the killings to "fulfil promises made to villagers" ahead of gram panchayat elections in December to control the dog population. *—PTI*

IN-A-FIRST, T'GANA POLICE LAUNCHES 'FIR FROM HOME' FOR CITIZENS

WHAT'S NEW?

Telangana CID is launching a citizen-centric system allowing FIR registration, including POCSO cases, without victims visiting police stations. The initiative, described as the first of its kind in India, begins 27 January after officer training.

WHO DOES IT HELP?

Victims of crimes against women and children, POCSO cases, SC/ST Act offences, child marriage and ragging cases, often vulnerable or traumatised.

HOW IT WORKS

- Police receive telephonic or oral info.
- Jurisdictional or Zero FIR officer reaches victim's location.
- Complaint and initial statement recorded on-site.
- FIR sent to police station for filing.
- FIR copy delivered at victim's location.
- Crime scene secured and investigation proceeds.

KILLED OVER PROBE

Blaze at LIC office was murder

MADURAI, 21 JAN

What initially appeared to be an accidental fire at a Life Insurance Corporation office has been established as murder, police said, with an assistant administrative officer accused of killing a senior manager by setting her ablaze.

The incident occurred at 8.15pm on 17 December, when a fire broke out at the LIC office, killing senior branch manager Kalyani Nambi, 55. Assistant administrative officer Ram, 45, who suffered burn injuries to his legs, was hospitalised and later arrested after investigators found evidence of foul play.

Police said Nambi, who had taken charge after being promoted and transferred from Tirunelveli in May last year, had been probing document irregularities allegedly involving Ram. On the day of the incident, she allegedly caught him burning documents soaked in petrol and attempted to call her son, Lakshmi Narayanan, to alert the police.

D Ram, Kalyani Nambi *PHOTO: ANI*

Investigators said Ram then poured petrol on Nambi, pushed her into the room where the documents were burning, locked the door from outside and fled. Petrol splashed on Ram's legs, causing burn injuries.

Suspicion arose after Narayanan, 25, lodged a complaint, citing a frantic phone call from his mother moments before the fire. CCTV footage from the office and nearby areas further pointed to Ram, who later confessed during questioning.

Nambi's post-mortem was conducted at Madurai Government Rajaji Hospital. Ram was arrested on 20 January and remains under treatment. A magistrate will question him at the hospital on Wednesday. Colleagues described Nambi as an upright officer known for pursuing fraud cases diligently. *—PTI*

ASHA WORKERS PROTEST IN WB

Thousands of ASHA workers blocked roads in Esplanade and Salt Lake areas in Kolkata, West Bengal, on Wednesday after police stopped their march to the State health department. They are demanding a minimum monthly honorarium of Rs 15,000 and Rs 5 lakh life insurance. Traffic was disrupted for over two hours, and several workers were detained for holding an "illegal" gathering. Some workers fell ill during the protest ***PHOTO: PTI***

Venezuela, Gaza, Ukraine: Is the UN failing?

Many wonder if the United Nations has any future if it cannot fulfil its promise of maintaining peace ***PHOTO: PTI***

The United Nations turned 80 in October last year; a venerable age for the most significant international organisation the world has ever seen.

But events of recent years – from last weekend's Trumpian military action to seize Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and Russia's unlawful invasion of Ukraine in 2022, to the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza – represent major challenges to the UN system.

Many are now asking whether the United Nations has any future at all if it cannot fulfil its first promise of maintaining international peace and security.

Has the UN reached the end of its lifespan?

The organ of the UN that plays the main role maintaining peace and security is the UN Security Council.

Under the rules established by the UN Charter, military action – the use of force – is only lawful if it has been authorised by a resolution from the UN Security Council (as outlined in Article 42 of the Charter), or if the state in question is acting in self-defence.

Self-defence is governed by strict rules requiring it to be in response to an armed attack (Article 51). Even then, self-defence is lawful only until the Security Council has stepped in to restore international peace and security.

The Security Council is made up of 15 member states:

- Five permanent (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – also known as the P5)
- 10 non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.

Resolutions require nine affirmative votes and no veto from any permanent member, giving the P5 decisive control over all action on peace and security.

This was set up expressly to prevent the UN from being able to take action against the major powers (the "winners" of the second World War), but also to allow them to act as a balance to each other's ambitions. This system only works, however, when the P5 agree to abide by the rules.

Could the UN veto system be reformed?

As aptly demonstrated by the Russians and Americans in recent years, the veto power can render the Security Council effectively useless, no matter how egregious the breach of international law.

For that reason, the veto is often harshly criticised.

Self-serving use of the veto power (meaning when a member state uses its veto power to further its own interests) may be politically objectionable but it is not legally prohibited.

The UN Charter imposes no enforceable limits on veto use. Nor is there any possibility of a judicial review of the Security Council at the moment.

And herein lies one of the most significant and deliberate design flaws of the UN system.

The charter places the P5 above the law, granting them not only the power to veto collective action, but also the power to veto any attempt at reform.

Reforming the UN Security Council veto is thus theoretically conceivable – Articles 108 and 109 of the charter allow for it – but functionally impossible.

Dissolving and reconstituting the UN under a new charter is the only structural alternative.

This, however, would require a level of global collectivism that presently does not exist.

An uncomfortable truth

It does, therefore, appear as though we are witnessing the collapse of the UN-led international peace and security system in real time.

The Security Council cannot – by design – intervene when the P5 (China, France, Russia, the UK and US) are the aggressors.

But focusing only on the Security Council risks missing much of what the UN actually does, every day, largely out of sight.

Despite its paralysis when it comes to great-power conflict, the UN is not a hollow institution. The Secretariat, for instance, supports peacekeeping and political missions and helps organise international conferences and negotiations.

The Human Rights Council monitors and reports on human rights compliance. UN-administered agencies coordinate humanitarian relief and deliver life-saving aid.

The UN machinery touches on everything from health to human rights to climate and development, performing functions that no single state can replicate alone.

None of this work requires Security Council involvement, but all of it depends on the UN's institutional infrastructure. The uncomfortable truth is we have only one real choice at present: a deeply flawed global institution, or none at all.

We support the UN not because it works perfectly, or even well, but because losing it would be much worse.

Should we work towards a better system that doesn't reward the powerful by making them unaccountable? Absolutely. But we shouldn't throw out all of the overlooked good the UN does beyond the Security Council's chambers because of the naked hypocrisy and villainy of the P5. *—The Conversation*

SALAR ساہر

Kerala's 2024 mpox cases linked to int'l travel

PHOTO: WHO

Cases from Kerala's 2024 mpox outbreak have been linked primarily to international travel from the United Arab Emirates, according to a genetic analysis.

Mpox, previously known as monkeypox, is a viral illness caused by the monkeypox virus. Common symptoms include a skin rash or lesions in the mucous that can last two to four weeks, along with fever, headache and muscle or back pain, low energy and swollen lymph nodes.

Researchers, including those from the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Virology in Pune, analysed 10 lab-confirmed cases of Mpox virus (MPXV) Clade Ib strain reported from September 2024 to March 2025.

Findings of the first in-depth analysis of clinical and genomic characteristics of the Clade Ib strain, published in the journal Virology, showed seven of the 10 individuals had a history of travel to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"From Kerala state, India, total of 10 cases of mpox Clade Ib were identified from September 2024 to March 2025... Notably, 70 per cent of the individuals had a history of travel to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), while one case had travelled from Oman, and another was a contact case," the authors wrote.

The first case of MPXV Clade Ib was identified in the Democratic Republic of Congo in September 2023. Since its emergence, the virus has spread to other countries in the African continent, including Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, and Burundi.

On August 14, 2024, the World Health Organisation declared the mpox outbreak a public health emergency of international concern due to the Clade Ib strain's rapid spread and disease severity.

Outside Africa, the Clade Ib strain was first detected in Sweden, with subsequent detections in the UK, India, US and China.

As of early 2025, more than 22,000 confirmed or suspected cases of Mpox caused by Clade Ib have been reported globally, with over 60 deaths attributed to this clade - most of them occurring in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the researchers said.

They added that the fatality rate for the Clade Ib strain is about three per cent higher than that for Clade IIb - the strain predominant during the 2022 outbreak.

"Clade IIb is notable for its efficient human-to-human transmission via both sexual and non-sexual contact with infected individuals," the authors said.

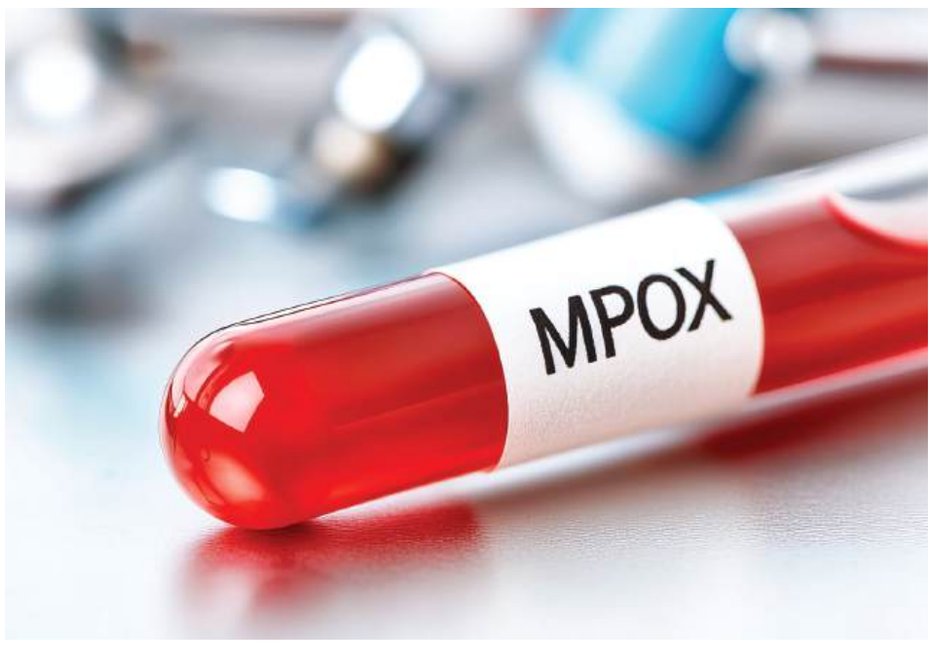
They added that the the Clade IIb sub-lineage A.2 predominantly drove the 2022 multi-country outbreak, which accounted for over 102,000 cases globally and prompted the WHO declare a public health emergency of international concern in July 2022.

58% mpox patients suffer lasting effects

A study examined 300 adults who had mpox either between May 2022 and January 2023 or who were at risk but never infected in the US, which saw some 30,000 cases during the period. The study found that more than half of those diagnosed with mpox still suffered physical effects 11 to 18 months later.

Some complained of anorectal or urinary problems. The study published in Annals of Internal Medicine was done by researchers from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Columbia University Division of Infectious Diseases, and University of Texas Health Science Centre Houston.

The study found that 58 per cent of those infected had at least one persistent symptom. Thirteen per cent of participants experienced ongoing physical function changes, and 2 per cent had their activities of daily living affected. *—PTI*



On August 14, 2024, the World Health Organisation declared the mpox outbreak a public health emergency of international concern due to the Clade Ib strain's rapid spread ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

NASA astronaut Sunita Williams retires after 27 years of service

NASA astronaut Sunita Williams has retired after 27 years of service, effective 27 December, 2025. With a remarkable career spanning three missions aboard the International Space Station, Williams has set numerous human spaceflight records, including logging 608 days in space, the second-most cumulative time by a NASA astronaut.

"Suni Williams has been a trailblazer in human spaceflight, shaping the future of exploration through her leadership aboard the space station and paving the way for commercial missions to low Earth orbit," said NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman. "Her work advancing science and technology has laid the foundation for Artemis missions to the Moon and advancing toward Mars, and her extraordinary achievements will continue to inspire generations to dream big and push the boundaries of what's possible. Congratulations on your well-deserved retirement, and thank you for your service to NASA and our nation," NASA said in a statement.

Williams logged 608 days in space -- second on the list of cumulative time in space by a NASA astronaut. She ranks sixth on the list of longest single spaceflight by an American, tied with NASA astronaut Butch Wilmore, both logging 286 days during NASA's Boeing Starliner and SpaceX Crew-9 missions.

Williams also completed nine spacewalks, totalling 62 hours and 6 minutes, ranking as the most spacewalk time by a woman and fourth-most on the all-time cumulative spacewalk duration list. She was the first person to run a marathon in space.

"Over the course of Suni's impressive career trajectory, she has been a pioneering leader," said Vanessa Wyche, Director of NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. "From her indelible contributions and achievements to the space station, to her groundbreaking test flight role during the Boeing Starliner mission, her exceptional dedication to the mission will inspire the future generations of explorers."

Williams launched for the first time aboard space shuttle Discovery with STS-116 in December 2006 and returned aboard space shuttle Atlantis with the STS-117 crew. She served as a flight engineer for Expeditions 14/15 and completed a then-record-breaking four spacewalks during the mission.

In 2012, Williams launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan for a 127-day mission as a member of Expedition 32/33. She also served as space station commander for Expedition 33. Williams performed three spacewalks during the mission to repair a leak on a station radiator and replace a component that gets power from the station's solar arrays to its systems, the statement said.

Sunita Williams has set many human spaceflight records, including logging 608 days in space ***PHOTO: PTI***

Most recently, Williams and Wilmore launched aboard the Starliner spacecraft in June 2024 as part of NASA's Boeing Crew Flight Test mission. She and Wilmore went on to join Expedition 71/72, and Williams again took command of the space station for Expedition 72. She completed two spacewalks on the mission and returned to Earth in March 2025, as part of the agency's SpaceX Crew-9 mission.

> **Anyone who knows me knows that space is my absolute favourite place to be**
>
> —Sunita Williams

"Suni is incredibly sharp, and an all-around great friend and colleague," said Scott Tingle, chief of the Astronaut Office at NASA Johnson. "She's inspired so many people, including myself and other astronauts in the corps. We're all going to miss her greatly and wish her nothing but the best."

Beyond her spaceflight experience, Williams held numerous roles throughout her NASA career. In 2002, she served as a NEEMO (NASA Extreme Environments Mission Operations) crew member, spending nine days living and working in an underwater habitat. After her first flight, she served as deputy chief of NASA's Astronaut Office.

She later was the Director of Operations in Star City, Russia, following her second mission to the space station. Most recently, she helped establish a helicopter training platform to prepare astronauts for future Moon landings, as per the statement.

The Needham, Massachusetts, native holds a bachelor's degree in physical science from the United States Naval Academy and a master's degree in engineering management from Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, Florida. A retired US Navy captain, Williams is an accomplished helicopter and fixed-wing pilot, having logged more than 4,000 flight hours in 40 different aircraft.

"It's been an incredible honour to have served in the Astronaut Office and have had the opportunity to fly in space three times. I had an amazing 27-year career at NASA, and that is mainly because of all the wonderful love and support I've received from my colleagues. The International Space Station, the people, the engineering, and the science are truly awe-inspiring and have made the next steps of exploration to the Moon and Mars possible. I hope the foundation we set has made these bold steps a little easier. I am super excited for NASA and its partner agencies as we take these next steps, and I can't wait to watch the agency make history," she said. *—ANI*

PHOTO: PTI

JD and Usha Vance are expecting fourth child

NEW YORK, 21 JAN

US Vice President JD Vance and Second Lady Usha Vance are expecting their fourth child, a boy, in late July. "Usha and the baby are doing well, and we look forward to welcoming him," the couple said, thanking military doctors and staff who support their family. The White House congratulated them on X, calling the administration "the most pro-family in history." The couple, who met at Yale Law School, have three children: Ewan, 8, Vivek, 5, and Mirabel, 4. Usha, 40, is a litigator and former clerk to Chief Justice John Roberts and Judge Brett Kavanaugh. Her parents emigrated from India in the late 1970s. Vance, 41, has long campaigned for higher birth rates in the US. *—PTI*

Amid WEF, 400 millionaires call for tax on super-rich

WASHINGTON, 21 JAN

Nearly 400 millionaires and billionaires from 24 countries have urged global leaders to increase taxes on the super-rich, warning that extreme wealth is corrupting politics, fuelling inequality, and harming the planet. The open letter, timed with the World Economic Forum in Davos, was signed by figures including Mark Ruffalo, Brian Eno, and Abigail Disney. It claims a small group of oligarchs have "bought up our democracies" and deepened poverty. A survey by Patriotic Millionaires found 77 per cent of millionaires in G20 countries believe the ultra-wealthy buy political influence, while over 60 per cent see extreme wealth as a threat to democracy. Two-thirds support higher taxes on the super-rich to fund public services. Oxfam reported that last year, the richest 1 per cent owned three times more than global public wealth. *—Agencies*

Minnesota Mayor, Guv subpoenaed amid ICE protests

MINNEAPOLIS, 21 JAN

Federal prosecutors in the US have served grand jury subpoenas to Minnesota Governor Tim Walz's office and five other officials in the state, on Tuesday, as part of an investigation into whether they obstructed or impeded law enforcement during a sweeping immigration operation in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The subpoenas, which seek records, were also sent to the offices of Attorney General Keith Ellison, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, St Paul Mayor Kaohly Her and officials in Ramsey and Hennepin counties, sources said on condition of anonymity. This comes as protests both for and against the Trump administration have rocked the region, accentuated by the recent shooting of a US citizen in her car. *—PTI*

New Zealand to head to polls on 7 November

WELLINGTON, 21 JAN

New Zealand will hold a general election on 7 November, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon announced. Luxon, leader of the centre-right National Party, seeks a second term, aiming to convince voters that his post-pandemic economic recovery plans are working amid high living and housing costs. The main Opposition, Labour, led by Chris Hipkins, has regained support since its poor 2023 showing, setting up a tight contest. Luxon, a former Air New Zealand executive, is criticised for inexperience, while Hipkins, who briefly served as prime minister in 2023, faces scrutiny for his role in strict Covid-19 lockdowns. For the second consecutive election, the premiership is contested by two men named Christopher. *—PTI*

TRUMP FLAYS 'LOSER' EUROPE IN DAVOS

'Weak Europe can't protect Greenland'

DAVOS, 21 JAN

US President Donald Trump insisted he wants to "get Greenland, including right, title and ownership" because a weakened Europe would not be able to protect it from China and Russia.

Trump began his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Wednesday by greeting "so many friends" and "a few enemies".

He then launched a blistering attack on European countries, calling them "losers".

"I love Europe, and I want to see Europe go good, but it's not heading in the right direction," Trump said. "We want strong allies, not seriously weakened ones."

Trump said China is selling windmills to "stupid people in Europe and making fortunes".

Observing that he did not see any windmills in China, Trump said, "Windmills kill birds, destroy landscapes, and stupid people buy them...You are supposed to make money with energy, not lose it. People lose money when windmills come up on their land".

Trump also touted his improving relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping, noting that he used to call China a "virus". But Xi asked him not to, so Trump obliged.

The Republican added an extraordinary warning to Europe, saying NATO members can say yes to his wish to acquire Greenland "and we'll be very appreciative. Or you can say, no, and we will remember." He noted that Venezuela made a deal shortly after the US military attack.

Trump also credited his tariff policy for revitalising the American economy, which had collapsed under former US president "Sleepy Joe Biden".

"When America booms the whole world booms," Trump asserted. "You all follow us down, and you follow us up."

Trump said he was "reasonably close" to settling the Russia-Ukraine war," as he touted himself for settling eight wars.

He said that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy would be stupid if they didn't end the war now. Months of the US' push for a deal have appeared to stall. " Russia wants to make a deal. Ukraine wants to make a deal," he said. Without his administration, he said, the war would've likely escalated into World War 3. *—PTI*

> **I love Europe, and I want to see Europe go good, but it's not heading in the right direction. We want strong allies, not seriously weakened ones**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

Trump to meet Zelenskyy at WEF

Trump will meet krainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday at the WEF. Meanwhile, US envoys Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss the peace deal.

> **We prefer respect to bullies. We prefer science to conspiracy theories, rule of law to rule of force .... Competition from the US through trade agreements.... openly aim to weaken and subordinate Europe**
>
> —Emmanuel Macron, French President

Don's plane briefly returns after glitch

Trump's plane, Air Force One, returned to Joint Base Andrews about an hour after departing for Switzerland on Tuesday. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said the decision was made after "a minor electrical issue" was found.

DAVOS, 21 JAN

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on Tuesday warned that the world is witnessing a fundamental "rupture" in the global order rather than a "transition" and flayed the weaponisation of trade, in a reference

In his address at the 56th Annual Summit of the World Economic Forum (WEF), Carney said: "Today, I will talk about a rupture in the world order... where major geopolitical powers operate with few limits and constraints."

"For decades, countries like Canada prospered under what we called the rules-based international order," he added. "We knew that the story of a rules-based international system was partially false... (But) this fiction was useful, and American hegemony, in particular, helped provide public goods, open sea lanes, a stable financial system, collective security and support for frameworks for resolving disputes."

But "every day, it seems we are living in an era of great power rivalry, where the rules-based order is fading," he said. "Great powers have begun using economic integration as weapons, tariffs as leverage, financial infrastructure as coercion, supply chains as vulnerabilities to be exploited."

"We know the old order is not coming back. We shouldn't mourn it," he added. "Nostalgia is not a strategy."

He said that Canada is actively diversifying its economic partnerships and negotiating deals with India, ASEAN, Thailand, the Philippines and the Mercosur bloc.

"You cannot live within the lie of mutual benefit through integration when integration becomes the source of your subordination. As a result, many countries have drawn the same conclusion: they must develop greater strategic autonomy... When rules do not protect you, you must protect yourself," Carney said.

Carney also opposed US aspirations to expand its Arctic territory. "We stand firmly with Greenland and Denmark and fully support their unique right to determine Greenland's future." *—Agencies*

On 1st yr anniv, Trump throws docus of 'accomplishments'

WASHINGTON, 21 JAN

US President Donald Trump recapped his first year back in office by showing a document of "Accomplishments" and then throwing it on the floor.

"It's big stuff too," Trump said of the document. "We have the hottest country in the world".

For over 100 minutes, Trump held a press conference at the White House on Tuesday where he attempted to tout his administration's many successes. But he got distracted in the middle and spent at least ten minutes showing mugshots of people the government had arrested.

Sensing he was losing his crowd, he threw that on the floor as well.

Trump also played with a binder clip, saying it could have cut his finger off and suggested that a journalist had placed it with the documents. He threw it on the floor as well.

US President Donald Trump was supposed to tout how great his first year was, but instead threw the document on the floor ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

Among the many tangents he embarked on, Trump said that millions of federal workers were terminated by his administration.

Because of it, Trump said the workers are "getting much better jobs and much higher pay".

Trump has long said he is his best spokesman.

His press conference came just before he left for Davos. However, Trump said that he would not attend an emergency G7 meeting that French President Emmanuel Macron proposed to discuss Greenland and the Russia-Ukraine war.

"No, I wouldn't do that... Because Emmanuel is not going to be there (in power) very long and there's no longevity there," he said.

Trump also attacked NATO, saying he had done more for it than any other person, "dead or alive". *—Agencies*

Iran vows retaliation against Trump, Israel

DUBAI, 21 JAN

Iran issued its most direct threat yet on Wednesday against the US after Tehran's bloody crackdown on protesters, warning that the Islamic Republic will be "firing back with everything we have if we come under renewed attack."

Referring to the 12-day war launched by Israel on Iran in June, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote in the Wall Street Journal: "Unlike the restraint Iran showed, our powerful armed forces have no qualms about firing back with everything we have if we come under renewed attack... This isn't a threat, but a reality."

He added: "An all-out confrontation will certainly be ferocious and drag on far, far longer than the fantasy timelines that Israel and its proxies are trying to peddle to the White House."

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for the Iranian armed forces, General Abolfazl Shekarchi, warned US President Donald Trump from taking any action against Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"Trump knows that if any hand of aggression is extended toward our leader, we not only cut that hand but also we will set fire to their world," Shekarchi, said. Trump had earlier said that it was "time to look for new leadership" for Iran.

Meanwhile , an American aircraft carrier group moves toward the Middle East from Asia, echoing the US' intervention in Venezuela.

Meanwhile, a Kurdish group said that Iran attacked one of its bases in Iraq, killing one fighter. *—PTI*

> **I have very firm instructions — anything happens (to me), they're going to wipe them (Iran) off the face of this earth**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

Sedition case: B'desh court sets 9 Feb for charges against Hasina

DHAKA, 21 JAN

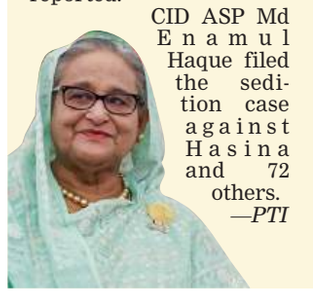
A Bangladesh court on Wednesday set 9 February as the date for holding another hearing on framing charges in a sedition case filed against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 285 others.

The case relates to allegations that Hasina and Awami League members took part in a virtual meeting of a group called the 'Joy Bangla Brigade' in December 2024, during which they allegedly plotted to overthrow the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government.

Judge Md Abdus Salam of Dhaka Special Judge Court-9 passed the order, allowing separate pleas from the defence, state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha reported.

Of the 286 accused, 259, including ousted PM Hasina, are still at large and are tried in absentia.

According to the CID probe, the online meeting, hosted by US Awami League leader Dr Rabbi Alam, was aimed at resisting the lawful government and inciting rebellion against the state, BSS reported.



CID ASP Md Enamul Haque filed the sedition case against Hasina and 72 others. *—PTI*

Netanyahu joins Trump's Board of Peace for Gaza

JERUSALEM, 21 JAN

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday he had agreed to join US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace tasked with overseeing the reconstruction Gaza.

The board, chaired by Trump, was originally envisaged as a small group of world leaders overseeing the Gaza ceasefire plan. However, Trump hinted that it would soon broker global conflicts.

Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan and Qatar also accepted invitations to join Trump's "board of peace" for Gaza, their foreign ministers say in a joint statement.

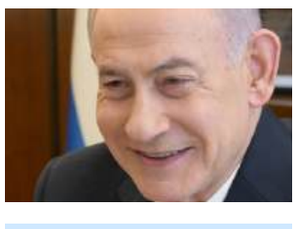
Others, like the UK, Canada, Russia, and India, have received invitations but have not yet responded.

Trump also invited Pope Leo XIV to join the Board of Peace, the Cardinal said.

Netanyahu's office had earlier criticised the plan saying it wasn't coordinated with the Israeli government and ran "contrary to its policy". However, Netanyahu's decision might place him at odds with the far-Right members of his Cabinet.

The Internation Criminal Court of Justice has issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces killed at least 11 Palestinians in Gaza, including two teenager, three journalists and a woman, hospitals said.*—PTI*



Board of peace might replace UN: Trump

Trump said that Board of Peace "might" replace the United Nations. Trump said that he wished the UN could have done more, but it "never lived up to its potential". Trump also reiterated that he settled eight plus wars. He added: "I wish the United Nations could do more..... The UN should have settled every one of the wars that I settled."

Don sees role for Machado in Caracas

WASHINGTON, 21 JAN

US President Donald Trump said that his administration was going to "involve" Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado in Venezuela, days after she presented him her Nobel Peace Prize.

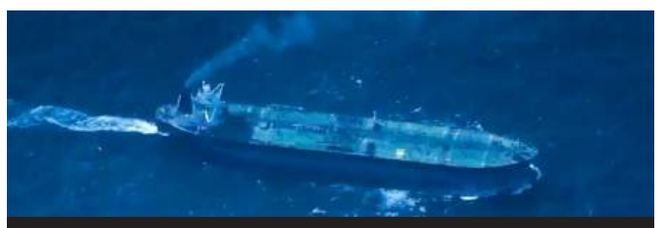
He said on Tuesday that she was an "unbelievably nice woman" and that he was "now loving Venezuela".

This comes after the US captured former Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro in a military operation.

Meanwhile, US military forces boarded and took control of a seventh oil tanker connected with Venezuela as part of the government's efforts to take control of the South American country's oil.

US Southern Command said that US forces apprehended the Liberian-flagged tanker Motor Vessel Sagitta "without incident... in the Caribbean."

The Sagitta is owned and managed by a company in Hong Kong. The tanker was sanctioned by the US under an executive order related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. *—Agencies*



The Hong Kong-owned Liberian tanker seized ***PHOTO: X@SOUTHCOM***

YOON ALLY JAILED IN MARTIAL LAW CASE

SEOUL, 21 JAN

A South Korean court on Wednesday ruled that the 2024 imposition of martial law by then-president Yoon Suk Yeol constituted rebellion, sentencing former prime minister Han Duck-soo to 23 years in prison for his involvement. Han, Yoon's appointee and acting president during the crisis, became the first Yoon administration official convicted of rebellion.

The Seoul court found Han attempted to legitimise Yoon's decree through the Cabinet Council, falsified martial law documents, and lied under oath. Judge Lee Jin-gwan warned Han's actions could have returned South Korea to dictatorship and endangered democracy.

Yoon has already been jailed on multiple charges. *—PTI*

2022 ASSASSINATION

Ex-Japan PM Shinzo Abe's killer gets life in prison

TOKYO, 21 JAN

A Japanese court on Wednesday sentenced the killer of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to life imprisonment.

Tetsuya Yamagami, the accused, 45, earlier pleaded guilty to killing Abe in July 2022.

The Nara District Court announced Wednesday that it had issued a guilty verdict and sentenced Yamagami to life in prison, as prosecutors requested.

The case has revealed decades of cosy ties between Japan's governing party and a controversial South Korean church.

Yamagami said he was motivated by hatred of a controversial church, and he killed Abe after seeing the former leader's video message sent to a group affiliated with the Unification Church, investigators said.

Abe was serving as a regular lawmaker after leaving the prime minister's job when he was killed in 2022 while campaigning in the western city of Nara.

Prosecutors demanded life imprisonment for Yamagami, while his lawyers sought a sentence of no more than 20 years, citing his troubles as the child. Japanese law authorises the death penalty, but it is not usually requested unless at least two people are killed.

Thousands of people signed a petition requesting leniency for Yamagami. *—Agencies.*

PHOTO: ANI

Lupin inks pact with Galenicum for Semaglutide

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Mumbai-based Lupin said its subsidiary Lupin Atlantis Holdings SA (LAHSA) has inked a licence and supply agreement with Galenicum Health for diabetes and weight management drug Semaglutide. Galenicum will handle development, manufacturing, and supply, while Lupin will manage regulatory approvals, commercialisation, and distribution across 23 countries, including Canada, Europe, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. Lupin President Fabrice Egros called the tie-up a "strategic milestone" amid rising global diabetes and obesity. Galenicum co-founder Joaquim Domingo said the partnership will help scale high-volume Semaglutide access worldwide. Semaglutide, a GLP-1 receptor agonist, regulates blood sugar and appetite.—*PTI*

INSPACe inks pact for 12 satellite constellation

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

The first set of satellites of India's privately-built national earth observation constellation will be launched in 2027 by a consortium of start-ups led by Bengaluru-based Pixxel Space.The Pixxel-led consortium signed an agreement with the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (INSPACe) in Bengaluru to build India's first indigenous commercial earth observation satellite constellation. The other partners in the consortium that will build and deploy the 12-satellite consortium are PierSight, SatSure Analytics India and Dhruva space. "By entrusting this over Rs 1,200 crore project to a consortium of Indian startups, the government validates the private space ecosystem," Pixxel Space co-founder Awais Ahmed said. By 2027, the the first four satellites will likely be in orbit. —*PTI*

India can process Venezuelan oil: IOCL Chairman

DAVOS, 21 JAN

Chairman of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL), A S Sahney, said that Indian refineries are "robust" and can process Venezuelan crude if it becomes available.

Sahney said that Indian Oil has processed Venezuelan crude before and can process it again in admixed form.

This comes after the US captured former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in a military operation and agreed on a deal to send 50 million barrels of oil, worth USD 5.2 billion, with the interim government.

Sahney said that stable global crude oil prices and India's strong economic growth are creating a favourable environment for both oil producers and consumers.

Sahney added, "Crude has been trading in the range of USD 60-65 per barrel over the past several months. This is a good zone where economic growth is also happening and sellers of crude are comfortable."

India remains heavily dependent on imports to meet its energy needs, with IOCL importing about 85-87 per cent of its crude oil requirements. The current price band is supportive for economic stability.

On refining margins, Sahney clarified that margins are not determined solely by crude prices and are affected by the cracks in the international market.

Sahney said that the government has provided adequate support to the energy sector. "There is no problem on the policy side. Whatever support is required has already been given. It is up to us to improve profitability by increasing efficiency, reducing costs and optimising the supply chain," he said. —*PTI*

Stock markets plumet amid geopolitical tensions at WEF

While BSE declined 270.84 points, NSE fell by 75 points

MUMBAI, 21 JAN

Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty recovered most of their losses to close lower in a volatile session on Wednesday as heightened geopolitical tensions kept investors away from riskier assets.

However, selective buying activity in some of the market heavyweights helped the indices restrict the losses, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 270.84 points, or 0.33 per cent, to 81,909.63. The benchmark tanked 1,056.02 points, or 1.28 per cent, to 81,124.45 during the day.

A total of 2,831 stocks declined while 1,437 advanced and 137 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 75 points or 0.30 per cent to 25,157.50.

Selling pressure in financial institutions, banking, and consumption stocks also added to the pressure.

From the 30-Sensex firms, ICICI Bank, Trent, Bharat Electronics, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro, State Bank of India and Maruti were among the biggest laggards.

Eternal, UltraTech Cement, InterGlobe Aviation and Reliance Industries were among the gainers.

The BSE midcap gauge tanked 1.01 per cent, and the smallcap index declined 0.80 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, consumer durables dropped 1.24 per cent, PSU Bank (1.07 per cent), financial services (1.02 per cent), bankex (0.94 per cent), capital goods (0.92 per cent), industrials (0.91 per cent) and private banks index (0.80 per cent).

BSE commodities, energy, metal, oil & gas and services were the gainers.

The rupee crashed 76 paise to close at an all-time low of 91.73 (provisional) against the American currency on Wednesday.

Selling pressure in finantial instututions, banks and consumption stocks added to the pressure *PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE*

HOW MARKETS PERFORMED

DOW (US)	48,509.80	(1.76%) ↓
S&P (US)	6,817.76	(2.06%) ↓
Nasdaq (US)	22,948.01	(2.06%) ↓
Nikkei (Japan)	52,774.64	(0.41%) ↓
Hang Seng (China)	26,585.07	(0.37%) ↓
DAX (Germany)	24,538.21	(2.06%) ↓
FTSE 100 (UK)	10,111.9	(0.14%) ↓
CAC (France)	8,407.39	(0.19%) ↓

Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 2,938.33 crore on Tuesday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 3,665.69 crore, according to exchange data.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dropped 1 per cent to USD 64.27 per barrel.

In Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei 225 index settled lower, while Kospi index in South Koria, SSE Composite index in Sanghai and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended higher. On Tuesday the BSE tumbled 1.28 points per cent. —*PTI*

US markets fall to 3 month low

US markets slid to a three-month low after President Donald Trump renewed his push to take control of Greenland, unsettling investors. On Tuesday, the S&P 500 fell 2.1 per cent, its steepest drop since October, while the Dow Jones industrials lost 1.8 per cent and the Nasdaq composite slid 2.4 per cent. The dollar fell 0.8 per cent against major currencies. Trump has threatened Denmark and other European countries with tariffs—*Salar News*

Gold soars to Rs 1.58 Lakh/10g

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Gold futures soared by Rs 7,774 to scale an all-time high of Rs 1,58,339 per 10 grams on Wednesday, as global prices breached the USD 4,800 per ounce-level amid sustained demand for the safe-haven assets.

The yellow metal futures for February delivery climbed by Rs 7,774, or 5.16 per cent, to touch a record of Rs 1,58,339 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Silver, too hit yet another record on the MCX. The white metal futures for the March contract soared by Rs 11,849, or 3.66 per cent, to Rs 3,35,521 per kilogram.

In the international market, gold futures on the Comex breached the USD 4,800-per-ounce level for the first time. The yellow metal for February delivery appreciated by USD 113.4, or 2.4 per cent, to USD 4,880.9 per ounce.

Comex silver futures for the March contract were trading 0.17 per cent higher at USD 94.79 per ounce, after hitting a record of USD 95.53 per ounce in the previous session.

The sharp rise in bullion prices was driven by sell-offs in global equity markets and renewed geopolitical concerns, including US ambitions toward Greenland, prompting investors to shift toward safe-haven assets. —*PTI*

FOREIGN FUND OUTFLOW

Rupee crashes to record low at 91.73 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 21 JAN

The rupee crashed 76 paise to close at an all-time low of 91.73 (provisional) against the American currency on Wednesday, pressured by persistent foreign fund outflow amid heightened uncertainty and risk-off sentiment in global markets.

The rupee recorded its previous all-time low of 91.14 on December 16, 2025, and so far this month, the local unit has fallen by 1.50 per cent, forex traders said, adding that the depreciation can be attributed to heightened geopolitical uncertainty prevalent in the current period.

Rising tensions in Europe over the Greenland issue and potential tariffs, along with a negative domestic market trend, further dented investor sentiment, they said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 91.05 and lost ground to touch an intraday low of 91.74 against the greenback. The domestic unit settled for the day at an all-time low of 91.73 (provisional), registering a decline of 76 paise from its previous close.

"Emerging economies like India are facing pressure from volatile capital flows," Abhishek Bisen, Head-Fixed Income, Kotak Mahindra AMC, said.

- The rupee recorded its previous all-time low of 91.14 on December 16, 2025, and so far this month, the local unit has fallen by 1.50 per cent, forex traders said.

Besides, geopolitical tensions, including the Greenland dispute that has strained US-Europe relations (which is a risk of NATO breakdown) and also the control of Venezuela's oil reserves by the US, are creating ripple effects across the global trade, he said.

However, given the strong forex reserves, the Reserve Bank of India can manage the situation as the depreciation has made INR relatively cheaper on REER basis, which shall shore up exports. —*PTI*

Adani to invest $66 billion in Maharashtra

DAVOS, 21 JAN

The Adani Group on Wednesday unveiled a USD 66 billion investment blueprint for Maharashtra at the World Economic Forum in Davos. The plan spans across aviation, clean energy, urban infrastructure, digital platforms and advanced manufacturing.

The plan includes the controversial redevelopment of Dharavi, one of India's most complex urban renewal projects, aimed at transforming Asia's largest slum into a planned commercial district. However, residents fear job losses, as Dharavi supports hundreds of thousands through small workshops and factories.

The group is also betting on Navi Mumbai as a growth hub, anchored by the Navi Mumbai International Airport.

Additional projects include 3,000 MW data centre parks, an arena district near the airport, coal gasification units, 8,700 MW of pumped-storage hydropower, and proposed semiconductor and display fabrication plants. Overall, the conglomerate outlined investments of more than Rs 6 lakh crore across Assam and Jharkhand.

In Assam, Adani plans an aviation hub in Guwahati, renewable energy projects totalling 2,700 MW. —*PTI*

ISRAELI INDUSTRIAL PARK IN ANDHRA?

AMRAVATI, 21 JAN

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday proposed the establishment of an Israeli industrial park in Andhra during meetings with Israeli representatives on the sidelines of the WEF in Davos, Switzerland.

During discussions with Nir Barkat, Israel's Minister for Economy and Industry, Roey Fisher, trade commissioner and Shir Slutzky, head of the Israel Economy and Trade Mission to Switzerland, Naidu said the proposed industrial park could serve as an anchor for Israeli firms.

They also deliberated on collaboration opportunities in defence, aerospace, and unmanned aerial vehicle ecosystems.

They also discussed prospects in desalination and groundwater quality improvement, semiconductors, quantum technologies, medicine, education, and cybersecurity.

Naidu met Calista Redmond, Vice President, Global AI Initiatives at Nvidia, to discuss fast-tracking plans for India's first artificial intelligence university in Amaravati. The government also discussed with Brookfield Asset Management on the USD 12 billion investment on infrastructure projects. —*PTI*

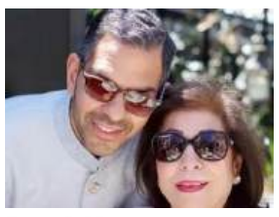


PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Rani Kapur moves high court against Priya Kapur

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Rani Kapur, mother of the late Sunjay Kapur, has approached the Delhi High Court alleging that her daughter-in-law Priya Kapur and other family members, used a fraudulent trust to unlawfully divert her entire estate and controlling stakes in key Sona Group companies.

Kapur has sought a declaration that the "RK Family Trust / Rani Kapur Family Trust", purportedly created through a trust deed dated October 26, 2017, is illegal, void, and the result of fraud, forgery and undue influence. She has also sought consequential reliefs, including dissolution of the trust, restitution of assets, rendition of accounts, and permanent injunctions restraining the defendants from acting upon or benefiting from the impugned trust. According to the plaint, Rani Kapur is the sole beneficiary and legatee of the entire estate of her late husband, Surinder Kapur, founder and promoter of the Sona Group, who passed away in June 2015.

The suit alleges that after suffering a stroke in September 2017, the plaintiff became physically and emotionally dependent on her son Sunjay Kapur and his third wife, Priya Kapur.

The defendants are alleged to have acted in concert to secretly divert her assets into the RK Family Trust without her free, informed, or conscious consent.

Kapur states that she had created two valid and registered trusts in 2016, the Dr SK Family Trust and the MK Family Trust, as part of a transparent estate planning exercise, under which she remained the settlor and principal beneficiary. —*PTI*

L'Oréal plans Rs 3,500 cr investment in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, 21 JAN

French beauty major L'Oréal plans to invest Rs 3,500 crore (350m) by 2030 in a Global Capability Centre (GCC) in Hyderabad, expected to be inaugurated in November this year. Announced by chief executive Nicolas Hieronimus on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, the facility will create 2,000 high-skilled jobs, including AI specialists, engineers and data scientists.

The centre, L'Oréal's first GCC globally in the beauty-tech segment, will serve as a hub for innovation, technology, data and supply chain operations, supporting the company's global digital and AI-led transformation. Tech solutions developed in Hyderabad will be deployed across L'Oréal's worldwide operations, strengthening the city's position as a global enterprise hub.

$25B for Life Sciences

The announcement coincided with unveiling of the 'Next-Gen Life Sciences Policy 2026–30' —*PTI*

AI will do software engg's job in 6 to 12 months: Anthropic CEO

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei warned at the World Economic Forum that artificial intelligence could perform the work of software engineers within six to 12 months. He said some engineers at Anthropic no longer write code, instead editing AI-generated output. A day earlier, Amodei criticised the Trump administration's decision to allow sales of advanced Nvidia chips to China, likening it to selling nuclear technology to North Korea. He targeted Nvidia, in spite of Anthropic's $10 billion deal with-it—*Salar News*

- Some engineers at Anthropic edited AI-generated output, Amodei said.

PROFIT INCREASES BY 73%

Who is Dhindsa, Eternal's new CEO replacing Goyal?

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Eternal Ltd., the parent company of Zomato and Blinkit, on Wednesday appointed Albinder Dhindsa as its group chief executive officer, succeeding Deepinder Goyal, who will remain on the board as vice chairman, subject to shareholder approval.

Dhindsa, 41, co-founded Grofers in 2013 with Saurabh Kumar. The hyperlocal delivery startup was rebranded as Blinkit in 2021 when it pivoted to a quick-commerce model, and was later acquired by Zomato in 2022. He has led Blinkit as CEO since the acquisition. Goyal said the "centre of gravity for operating decisions now moves to Dhindsa," who will oversee day-to-day execution, operating priorities, and business strategy.

Born in Patiala, Punjab, Dhindsa graduated in Mechanical Engineering from IIT Delhi and began his career in logistics and supply chain analysis at URS Corporation and Cambridge Systematics. He earned an MBA from Columbia Business School in 2010, briefly worked at UBS Investment Bank in the US, and returned to India to lead Zomato's international operations. He is married to Akriti Chopra, a former senior Zomato executive.

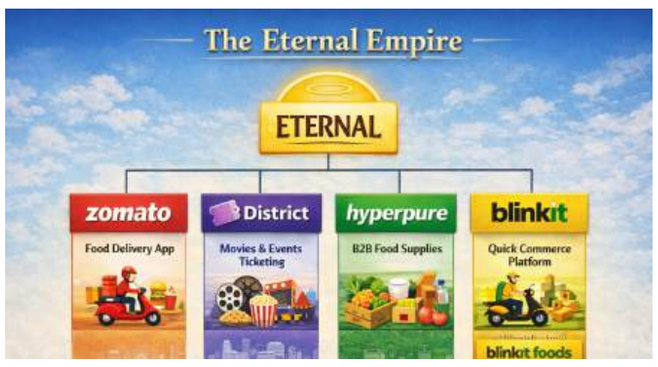


PHOTO: AI

Eternal's Q3 profit up 73%

Eternal reported a 72.88 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 102 crore for Q3 FY26, driven by Blinkit's revenue surge to Rs 12,256 crore from Rs 1,399 crore. Losses from its District business increased due to continued investments but are expected to reduce over the next 4–6 quarters. Cash balances fell slightly to Rs 17,820 crore due to capital expenditure and working capital requirements for Blinkit.

Goyal described howa menu-scanning platform grew into a succes —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

1st ODI: England announce playing XI against Lanka

COLOMBO, 21 JAN

The England and Wales Cricket Board on Tuesday announced the playing XI for the first One-Day International against Sri Lanka, on Wednesday at the R Premadasa International Cricket Stadium. The match marks the opening fixture of a three-game ODI series, with all matches to be played at the same venue. Harry Brook will continue as captain. The ODI series will be followed by three T20 Internationals, beginning on 30 January at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium. The T20Is will form part of preparations for the ICC T20 World Cup 2026, which begins next month. England XI: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Joe Root, Jacob Bethell, Harry Brook (capt), Jos Buttler (wk), Will Jacks, Sam Curran, Jamie Overton, Liam Dawson, Adil Rashid.—*PTI*

Esports World Cup 2026 unveils record Rs 686 crore prize

RIYADH, 21 JAN

The Esports World Cup Foundation has announced a USD 75 million (approx. Rs 686.5 crore) prize pool for the Esports World Cup 2026, returning to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from 6 July to 23 August. Over 2,000 players and 200 Clubs from 100+ countries will compete in 25 tournaments across 24 games, including Fortnite, Trackmania, League of Legends, and VALORANT. The flagship Club Championship will award USD 30 million (approx. Rs 274 crore), with USD 7 million (approx. Rs 64 crore) for the winning Club. Additional prizes include MVP awards and the Jafonso Award. EWCF will continue its Club Partner and Road to EWC programmes. Tickets go on sale 22 January, via esportsworldcup.com and global partners.—*ANI*

PHOTO: ANI

KKR appoints Yagnik as fielding coach ahead of IPL

KOLKATA, 21 JAN

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on Wednesday appointed former wicketkeeper-batter Dishant Yagnik as the fielding coach of the team ahead of IPL 2026. KKR said Yagnik would bring a wealth of experience and a sharp eye for fielding excellence to the team. A wicketkeeper-batter in his playing days, Yagnik enjoyed a solid domestic career representing Rajasthan and also made 25 IPL appearances between 2011 and 2014. Since his retirement, he has continued to be a part of the IPL ecosystem as fielding coach across several seasons. —*PTI*

KCL trophy tour thrills fans across Haryana

HISAR, 21 JAN

The Kabaddi Champions League (KCL) Trophy Tour visited Hisar on 19 January and Bhiwani on 20 January, aiming to engage regions and boost support for local teams. In Hisar, the trophy attracted fans, aspiring players, and the sporting community, reflecting the city's long-standing kabaddi tradition through school competitions and local tournaments. Bhiwani welcomed the trophy with equal enthusiasm, showcasing its strong sporting culture and appreciation for kabaddi's values of teamwork. The tour brings the league closer to grassroots communities, connecting fans with local teams. Next, the trophy heads to Rohtak between 25 January and 7 February in Sonipat.—*PTI*

ICC refuse to shift B'desh matches to Sri Lanka

Maintains there is no credible threat to Bangladesh players

DUBAI, 21 JAN

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday rejected the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) request to shift its T20 World Cup group-stage matches from India to Sri Lanka. It stated there was no credible threat to the safety of Bangladesh players, officials or fans at any of the tournament venues in India.

The decision was taken at an ICC Board meeting held via video conference. Of the 16 member boards, 14 voted against the relocation request, with only Bangladesh and Pakistan voting in favour. The ICC has given the BCB 24 hours to confirm its participation, failing which Bangladesh could be replaced by Scotland in Group C.

The development came hours after the Pakistan Cricket Board offered to host Bangladesh's matches. ICC sources said changes to the schedule at such a late stage were not feasible and could set an "undesirable precedent" in the absence of a verified security risk.

The ICC Board noted that relocating matches under the present circumstances could jeopardise the sanctity of ICC events PHOTO: PTI

The ICC said it had reviewed multiple security assessments, including independent evaluations, all of which found no material threat. It added that detailed venue-specific security plans, involving federal and state law enforcement agencies, had been shared with the BCB following sustained discussions in recent weeks.

An ICC spokesperson expressed concern that the BCB continued to link participation to what it described as a "single, isolated and unrelated development" involving one player's participation in a domestic league, which had no bearing on tournament security.

Bangladesh government's sports adviser Asif Nazrul had earlier stated that the national team would not travel to India under any circumstances. The crisis was triggered by pacer Mustafizur Rahman's removal from the Kolkata Knight Riders' IPL squad on BCCI instructions, citing unspecified developments.

- The decision was taken at an ICC Board meeting organised via video conference. Of the 16 member boards, 14 voted against the relocation request, with only Bangladesh and Pakistan voting in favour of the location

Bangladesh are placed in Group C alongside West Indies, England, Italy and Nepal. The BCB had sought to play all four matches in Sri Lanka or swap groups with Ireland to remain there throughout.

Former captain Tamim Iqbal and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto have urged caution, warning of long-term consequences of a hard-line stance amid strained ties. —*PTI*

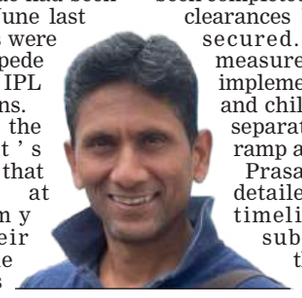
GETS CONDITIONAL PERMIT

Onus to return to Chinnaswamy now on RCB: Prasad

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) president Venkatesh Prasad on Wednesday urged Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) to continue hosting their IPL 2026 home matches at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, recalling the unwavering support the franchise has received from fans since its inception.

The stadium has received conditional permission from the Karnataka government to host IPL and international matches after multiple rounds of discussions between the KSCA and state agencies. Cricket at the venue had been suspended since June last year, when 11 fans were killed in a stampede during RCB's IPL victory celebrations.



RCB welcomed the government's decision, stating that while playing at Chinnaswamy remains their preference, the franchise is reviewing the conditions attached to the approval to ensure all fan safety protocols are fully met.

More safety measures

Prasad outlined major infrastructure and security upgrades underway, including widening entry gates by 6m, creating holding areas, and improving access for emergency services. He said the modifications, including structural changes to certain stands, are expected to be completed by 6 February.

Fire safety enhancements are largely in place. An underground water storage capacity of 30,000 litres has been completed. Power-related clearances have also been secured. Special measures are being implemented for women and children, including separate queues and ramp access.

Prasad added that detailed plans and timelines were submitted to the government. —*PTI*

Gill leads star cast as Ranji Trophy resumes

RAJKOT, 21 JAN

All eyes will be on Shubman Gill when Ranji Trophy resumes on Thursday after India's Test and ODI captain decided against taking a break and opting to turn up for Punjab against Saurashtra in a key Group B clash here.

After India's unlikely 1-2 ODI series loss to New Zealand, Gill headed straight to this city, setting up a marquee duel against Saurashtra all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja.

The fixture carries weight for both teams, with Saurashtra placed fourth on 13 points. Punjab sit sixth and face an uphill task in a group led by Karnataka on 21 points, three ahead of Maharashtra.

Another India regular in focus will be Mohammed Siraj, who is set for his first outing as Hyderabad captain at his home ground. Siraj,

returning from International duty, replaces G Rahul Singh in the role and will lead Hyderabad against 42-time champions Mumbai in Group D, also marking his first Ranji appearance of the season.

KL Rahul is also set to bolster Karnataka when they face Madhya Pradesh in Alur, strengthening the Group B leaders' push for a quarter-final berth, while Nitish Kumar Reddy will turn out for Andhra Pradesh against Vijay Hazare Trophy champions Vidarbha in Anantapur. —*PTI*

UP Warriorz hold edge against Gujarat in WPL playoffs

VADODARA, 21 JAN

UP Warriorz will start with a clear edge when they take on a struggling Gujarat Giants here on Thursday, as the race for the remaining two playoff spots in the Women's Premier League heats up.

Former champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru have already sealed qualification with five wins from five matches, while Delhi Capitals' seven-wicket win on Tuesday has thrown the rest of the table wide open. Mumbai Indians, UP Warriorz, Delhi and Gujarat are all locked on four points, with the net run rate separating them.

Having secured back-to-back wins, Warriorz are ahead of Gujarat who are languishing at the bottom with three losses on the trot. Gujarat, however, will take confidence from their victory over UP Warriorz in the first leg.

In what was their opening match of the season, Gujarat restricted the Warriorz to 197/8 and successfully defended 207 with disciplined bowling to secure their first win.

They followed it up with a four-run win over Delhi Capitals, again crossing the 200-run mark. But their campaign has since unravelled as their batting lost momentum.

Despite scoring 192/5 against Mumbai Indians, Gujarat lost, triggering a slide that has seen them bundled out for 150 chasing 183 against RCB, before managing just 117/8 while chasing 179 previously against the same team. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Daryl topples Kohli for top spot in ICC ODI rankings

DUBAI, 21 JAN

Indian superstar Virat Kohli has been displaced from the top spot by New Zealand swashbuckler Daryl Mitchell in the latest ICC ODI rankings for batters following the latter's stupendous run of form in the just-concluded series.

The Hamilton product is in the form of his life, scoring 352 runs across the three-game series. His series total was the most ever by a New Zealander in a three-match ODI series and the third-most of all time, behind only Pakistan's Babar Azam (360 against the West Indies in 2016) and India's Shubman Gill (360 against New Zealand in 2023).

"With 845 ranking points, he aptly replaces Kohli (795 points) who drops to No.2 on the list in the latest rankings release. The pair sit well clear of a chasing pack that includes Ibrahim Zadran, Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill and Babar Azam," the ICC said in a statement.

Mitchell scored two hundreds during the rubber and the 34-year-old also became the fourth-fastest male to nine one-day international hundreds, in just his 54th innings, sitting behind only Imam-ul-Haq (48), Hashim Amla (52) and Quinton de Kock (53).

New Zealand won the series 1-2, their first on Indian soil in the ODI format, to end a 37-year wait.

It is the second time Mitchell has held the No.1 ranking in ODI cricket, but his previous spell at the top only lasted three days last November before he was overtaken by Rohit. —*PTI*

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Sabalenka, Gauff, Alcaraz cruise into third round

MELBOURNE, 21 JAN

Aryna Sabalenka, Coco Gauff and Carlos Alcaraz, the top seeds in their respective draws, progressed to the third round of the Australian Open on Wednesday.

Defending champion and top seed Sabalenka defeated China's Bai Zhouxuan 6-3 6-1 at Rod Laver Arena. The Belarusian raced to a 5-0 lead before being tested by Bai's defence and drop shots, needing seven set points to close the opener. Sabalenka, bidding for a fifth Grand Slam title, later powered through the second set and will next face Anastasia Potapova, who beat former US Open champion Emma Raducanu.

Third seed Gauff was equally clinical, brushing aside left-hander Olga Danilovic 6-2 6-2 at Margaret Court Arena. The American is seeking her first final appearance in Melbourne, having previously reached the semi-finals.

Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus celebrates after defeating Bai Zhuoxuan of China at the Australian Open tennis championship PHOTO: PTI

Top-seeded men's player Alcaraz overcame a stern challenge from Germany's Yannick Hanfmann, winning 7-6(4) 6-3 6-2. The 22-year-old Spaniard is chasing his first Australian Open title and a career Grand Slam. —*PTI*

BHAMABRI-GORANSSON ADVANCE WITH FLUENT WIN

India's top doubles player Yuki Bhambri, partnering with Sweden's Andre Goransson, advanced to the second round of the men's doubles event at the Australian Open with a straight-sets win here on Wednesday. The 10th-seeded Indo-Swedish pair defeated wild card entrants James Duckworth and Cruz Hewitt 6-3 6-4 in a contest that lasted 57 minutes on Court 13. Playing percentage tennis, Bhambri and his partner won 97 per cent of their points played on their first serve. They were equally impressive on tackling points on the second serve, winning 91 per cent of those. Bhambri and Goransson broke their rivals twice and did not face a single break point in the match, maintaining control throughout. - PTI

BACKED BY BACHCHAN JR

ETPL announces Waugh, Maxwell as owners

NAGPUR, 21 JAN

The European T20 Premier League (ETPL), co-founded by Bollywood actor Abhishek Bachchan, on Wednesday announced Australian great Steve Waugh, Glenn Maxwell and former Australian hockey star Jamie Dwyer as franchise owners ahead of its launch later this year.

Backed by the cricket boards of Ireland, Scotland and the Netherlands, the multi-country franchise league has received approval from the International Cricket Council, making it the first ICC-sanctioned league to be staged across multiple nations. The ETPL is scheduled to run from 26 August to 20 September, 2026.

The league will feature six franchises. Three — Amsterdam, Belfast and Edinburgh — have already been sold, while the remaining teams will be based in Dublin, Rotterdam and Glasgow. Former New Zealand players Kyle Mills and Nathan McCullum are also among the owners.

ETPL is co-founded by actor Abhishek Bachchan PHOTO: ANI

Waugh, who is part of a consortium owning the Amsterdam Flames, described Europe as "the last frontier of cricket". His group includes Dwyer, while Maxwell will co-own the Irish Wolves with Rohan Lund, former Group CEO of Australia's NRMA. McCullum and Mills have purchased the Edinburgh franchise.

- The multi-country franchise league has received approval from the International Cricket Council, making it the first ICC-sanctioned league to be staged across multiple nations

Bachchan is a co-founder alongside three other Indian investors. The league aims to combine local and international talent to grow the game in Europe. According to Waugh, Steven Smith, Australia T20's Mitchell and Netherlands skipper Scott Edwards are among signed by Amsterdam Flames. —*PTI*

Tata Steel Masters: Gukesh holds Praggs

WIJK AAN ZEE, 21 JAN

World champion D Gukesh played out his fourth consecutive draw at the Tata Steel Masters, signing peace with compatriot and defending champion R Praggnanandhaa in the fourth round on Tuesday.

Praggnanandhaa, still searching for his first win, was again denied despite pressing for much of the game.

Gukesh countered the French Defence with an unusual variation, and although Praggnanandhaa damaged White's queenside pawn structure, the game eventually petered out into a drawn queen-and-pawns endgame. With two draws and two losses, Praggnanandhaa remains joint bottom of the standings alongside Anish Giri.

Arjun Erigaisi also had to settle for a draw for the third day in a row, failing to breach Giri's trademark solid defence in a largely uneventful rook-and-pawns endgame.

American Hans Moke Niemann handed Aravindh Chithambaram his first defeat of the tournament, producing a powerful middlegame that included a dangerous queen sacrifice.

Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov defeated Czech GM Thai Dai Van Nguyen to move into a share of the lead.

Abdusattorov and Niemann now top the standings with three points from four rounds. They are closely followed by Erigaisi, Uzbek youngster Javokhir Sindarov and Dutchman Jorden van Foreest.

Sindarov also impressed, beating Germany's Matthias Blübaum, a Candidates' Tournament participant later this year. —*PTI*